

"NOT SURE ABOUT, THAT SAME.": "AN OWER TRUE TALE."

MRS. E OAKES SMITH

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“NOT SURE ABOUT, THAT SAME.”

“AN OWER TRUE TALE.”

BY MRS. E. OAKES SMITH, AUTHOR OF THE “SINLESS CHILD,” ETC.

“AND so you have had two wives, Robert, they tell me, and you are a very young man still.”

This was said by way of parenthesis to Robert Kennie, the gardener, who had a year before married a pretty seamstress, very much to his own happiness and the discomfort of certain families in the neighbourhood, who from that time forth despaired of having “gaging,” “side stitch,” or “over and over,” ever again done to their liking. And now Jeannie was slightly ill, began to look shy, and her blushes were brighter than ever; and many were the old baskets and “budget bags” examined in her behalf.

“Two wives did you say, ma'am?”

“Yes, Robert,” and the last parcel was thrust into the basket in the same breath with the response. Strange enough, Robert set the basket upon the floor, and the smile of honest pride and pleasure, at the interest we all took in the affairs of little Jeannie, passed from his face, and he replied, in a thoughtful, musing manner—

“I am not sure about that same, ma'am. 'Twould be a great easing to my mind, ma'am, if you would explain things a bit to me.”

“Certainly, Robert, I will aid you in any way I can, to the best of my judgment; but will not Jeanie be expecting you home?”

“No—Kate Randell is staying with her; and I think I might be made a happier man by telling a bit about poor Mary.”

He had taken a small rake, unawares it would seem, into the room; and now having respectfully taken the chair I pointed out, he leaned his two hands upon the handle of the implement, and to my astonishment I beheld the large tears dropping from his eyes upon the floor. I did not interrupt his grief, for it was too late to tell him he had no right to call little Jeane his wife, if the memory of Mary was still so painfully dear to him. Besides, he was a poor unlettered youth, and while so many of his betters sanction all sorts of inconsistency in matters of sentiment, it seemed idle cruelty to attempt to set him right.

“So many of his betters!” But Robert shall tell his own story, and then we shall see if the unlearned and simple-hearted do not live nearest to the Temple of Truth.

“I am thinking, ma'am, I committed a great wrong in the matter of poor Mary, and my mind is never quite easy about it. I didn't think so much about it till the day she died, poor thing!”

Here Robert was silent, for his voice was fairly

choked by his emotion. I, too, half arose from my seat, and nervously re-arranged the geranium stand, with that instinctive selfishness natural to persons of quick sensibilities, who dread to have their sympathies painfully awakened. The movement aroused the professional jealousy of Robert, whose habits of forethought in the taste of these little arrangements seemed to be impeached by my interference. It gave him, too, a more defined current of thought.

“I am thinking, ma'am, that some women folks are just like these flowers. They must have just the right kind of sile, and the right light, and the right heat, and every thing suited to their natures, or they will die. 'Tis n't so with all plants, for some will seem to get along and grow, and flower, and look well, under any treatment, and so it is with most of women. But poor Mary was like one of these geraniums, and when she withered away, it seemed a kind of cruelty, just as it always looks to me, to see a geranium dying out of place.”

This professional illustration of the point in hand seemed to linger upon the fancy of Robert, as if by dwelling upon it, his taste and his sentiment were both alike gratified.

“Why, Robert, you are certainly indulging a sickly fancy in talking in this wise of Mary; and as to any self-reproach, it ought to be out of the question, for I am sure you have too good a heart to neglect any one. And then too, Robert, I shall speak frankly, for I have heard that Mary was a sickly, complaining, melancholy creature, likely to make both herself and you miserable. Now, Jeane

———”

“God bless her,” interrupted the gardener, rising to an attitude of respectful earnestness; “but indeed, ma'am, that is why I wish to tell of Mary, because she was blamed when I was the one to bear the blame. God forbid that I should ever have neglected Mary. No, no. I cared for her night and day, but it wasn't the right kind of care, nor from the right one, and she grew sickly, pined, and died. She didn't love me, ma'am, as a woman should love to become a wife.”

“Robert, have you ever been to your priest, and told him of this matter? Did you ask counsel of him?”

“In part, ma'am, but he doesn't seem rightly to understand me, and things are not clear to my own mind; only I believe but for me Mary Duncan might at this day be fresh and blooming, and singing like a bird, as she always did, poor thing!”

You see, when I first came to this country, ma'am, I was employed by old Mr. Brewster upon his grounds, and Mary was a bit of a lass doing small work for the ladies of the family. At first she was always smiling like, and singing. Then she began to grow pale, and mute; and I—I, a fool of a boy, must needs think she was pining for me. Then I began to think how wondrous lovely, and meek, and good she was. One day I did something tender-like to her, and she burst out a crying as if her little heart would break. I put her head on my shoulder, and comforted her, and she seemed like a dear child to me. You must know that Mary talked the whole matter over before she died, and she seemed more like the holy Virgin in spirit than any thing else.

"I never talked love to that child, ma'am, never; and yet I began to talk about going to the priest's. Mary was fearful in her nature, and she did not tell me all about herself. She was an orphan with neither kith nor kin, and like one of these plants made to cling to something else or they cannot grow. She had a lover, to whom she had been attached like ever since they were little children. She did not tell me this till I began to regard her so much mine, that it would have been terrible to part with her. He was to come out at a certain period, and she was to keep her faith till that time. If he did not come, she might suppose he was dead or changed.

"Poor little Mary!—this was the time I first began to notice her. She moved about heavy-like, and grew pale, and the smallest thing set her to crying. She sometimes thought he had forgotten her; and then came the fear that he might be dead. My sympathy—for I thought maybe the child is ailing for home,—helped to turn her away from gloom; and we sat hours talking about auld Ireland, and the places and people we had known there. Then when I began to go with her wherever she went, never talking about it,—for somehow I did not, yet I could never bear to see any body else near her, and even was angry when Mary did not look to me for protection. Then Mary told me of the absent lover. She was gentle and loving in her nature, and had regarded me as a brother whom she might love and trust with no thought as to the future.

"Ma'am, I was nigh on't wild when I heard of this; and I made Mary promise, that if Dermott did not come within two weeks after the time appointed, she would be my wife. You may think she was unhappy, ma'am. No; she was so like a sweet child, that when she saw all smiling and happy about her, she couldn't be miserable herself, even though things weren't quite to her liking. But I remember now, and, ma'am, I shall never forget how tearful her eyes looked sometimes, and how she tried to smile and it came faint-like, and her hands grew icy cold, and her voice stopped its singing. But I wouldn't regard these things then; and God forgive me, often and often I wished Dermott would never come—for I was selfish, and

full of a blind love for the meek, innocent creature."

Robert was for many moments silent, as if a perplexing and painful current of thought oppressed him. He resumed.

"Well, the time come, and no lover come with it; the two weeks were over, and the bridal made ready. We had a few of our own people, and the priest made Mary mine; and she seemed quite gentle and content, and I thought more beautiful, and lovable than ever. I don't know why it is, ma'am, that a sorrowful face should go so nigh to the heart; but so it is.

"We were to have a fine treat; and while the females prepared that in one room, the younger folks were making merry in the other. We heard a knock at the door, and then some one spoke. Mary sprang for the door, and I, ma'am,—yes, I,—held the poor child back with a grasp that left the prints upon her arm. I held that child from the heart that——"

Robert's eyes were distended as if with horror at the recollection, and then suddenly drawing in his breath, he sank like a stricken child upon his knees, and scarcely above a whisper, uttered—

"Tell me truly, ma'am, was it not my duty then at that moment to have given her to her lover?"

"Most assuredly, Robert. God forgive you that you did not."

"Amen."

The voice was so sepulchral, that I started and looked around to see from where it could have come.

"I did not. Ah! she was so beautiful, so lovable, and the priest had bound her to me. She was mine. I could not, would not resign her to another. The very peril of losing her made me more fiend than human."

"What did Mary say, Robert?"

"Poor girl! She only looked into my face, so still, so sorrowful, her blue eyes without a tear, and her dear cheek white, and the light curls all away from one side of her face, just as they had fallen when I thrust her back. I thought she had stopped breathing. Then the door opened, and closed softly, and the room was hushed as if for the dead.

"My mother whispered how Dermott was there, and how she had told him all; and that he was sitting by the door with no power to move. And then she turned to Mary, and said, 'He only asks one kiss of ye, Mary, and then he will never trouble ye again.' 'One, Robert, only one,' said poor Mary, rising to go. 'Ye are my wife, Mary, and James Dermott shall never, never kiss your cheek;' and I held her with a strong hand. Mary neither spoke nor moved."

"Robert, Robert, you may well pray God to forgive you —" I stayed my speech, for the man was crushed at his own recollections.

"Mary never uttered his name from that time forth. She strove to smile. She was gentle and good; and oh! so quiet, that I would have given worlds to have met an angry glance. I would

have given worlds to have had her reproach me. But night and day I watched over her. I was doomed to early lose the being I had wronged, and whose patient misery was a perpetual reproach to me. I neglected every thing to meet her slightest wishes; while she, as she never reproached me, so did she forbear always to call upon me for the slightest attention. She had a forlorn aspect, as a plant will have that has been left to the mercy of a storm."

"Did she live long, Robert?"

The man started with a sharp expression of pain.

"One day my mother came in and told us that Dermott was dead. It was not a year from that fatal night. The third day Mary was in her grave. A blossom of beauty, and a bud never unfolded to the light. My mother—for women feel differently about these things from what we do—my mother bade me bury Mary beside of Dermott, and I obeyed."

"Robert," I said, "you are ill. This is so unlike you, that I cannot believe it to be a real truth you have told me."

"Aye, ma'am, it seems like a terrible dream to me. I have tried to think it over. I have tried to find an excuse for my cruelty. But poor dead Mary,—it is too, too true. It was not love that I bore her—it was the love of power—the tenderness of a brother;—but I could never bear opposition. I could not sacrifice my own will for the happiness of any creature, till this great grief changed my whole nature."

"But where is Jeane all this time? Did you conceal this strange story from her?"

"God forbid. I told it her when I first found what it meant to lose another. And to-night she bade me talk with you, thinking you might see it in a different light from what I did."

"No, Robert, no; do not hide your great fault from your own eyes. Dare to look it in the face, and repent manfully therefor. Mary was no wife of yours in the sight of God, and you should have yielded her to the lover, the betrothed lover, whom you defrauded by a miserable quibble—for days and weeks are not to be named in the calendar of vows between true hearts."

Robert bowed his head in silence. At length he resumed, in a tone trembling from anxiety—

"Jeane is not in the least like poor Mary; and yet now when she is moving in the very room where poor Mary used to sit so quietly, and she is silently making this small work, I have more than once shuddered to see just such a look pass over her face as Mary had. I sometimes fear I am to be punished in a still greater manner—that the four years of agony is not atonement enough!"

And the tears gushed from the eyes of the darkened man, and he grasped the chair convulsively.

Little can be said upon subjects like these. They are viewed according to the enlightenment of sentiment, and conscience; and only to the Great Comforter can the weary heart carry its burden.

Robert's presentiments of evil, however, were unrealized. Jeane is as blooming, and more cheerful than ever—for a house is ever prosperous where love presides at the altar; and the smiles of infancy will of themselves chase away all the spirits of evil.

ONE OF MR. WILTON'S REMINISCENCES.

CLAVERS, MARY

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ONE OF MR. WILTON'S REMINISCENCES.

BY MARY CLAVERS, AUTHOR OF "A NEW HOME," ETC.

WHEN I was a young man, just commencing the practice of law in the city, I became exceedingly fascinated by a young lady who happened to be boarding, with her aunt, at the same house with myself. This fair damsel was bright-eyed and rosy-cheeked, and always looked as if she had just stepped out of a French print—so exactly fashionable and becoming was her costume. But above all, she had that enviable ease and self-possession which is the one thing hopeless to a bashful youth like myself, country bred, and only just beginning to learn the manifold ins and outs of conversational good breeding. This self-possession of hers had a magical power of putting me at ease in her society, and I became in consequence more fond of being there than anywhere else.

I had never asked myself whether my liking for Miss Ebrington was founded upon any thing that would bear the inquisition of my sober judgment; and I had never frequented society enough to be able to compare her manners with those of other young ladies. She was always surrounded by admirers, and yet always seemed to me to show peculiar favour towards my timid attempts at a gallantry which, I dare say, sat as ill upon me as would the numberless frills and flounces of my fair friend upon one of my plain, sober sisters. So I could not afford to be reasonable in the matter. If a girl of Miss Ebrington's claims would overlook my awkwardness, it was not for me to question her various excellencies; and I was about to surrender without any discretion at all, when I received from the country a large packet of letters directed to Miss Isabella Walton, accompanied by a special request from my sister that I would deliver the important budget with my own hands.

Miss Walton's name was not unknown to me, for I was intimate with some relatives of hers in the country, but to call upon her at her own house was a task indeed. All the woodland moss which I had vainly flattered myself had been rubbed off in Miss Ebrington's society, seemed to come back upon me thick and threefold as I turned over and over in my own mind the probable circumstances of my visit. In the agony of my sheepishness, I was about to entreat Miss Ebrington to lend me her countenance on the occasion, when I recollecting having heard her speak slightly of Miss Walton, as a prim, exclusive pattern-woman, and concluded that she would not wish to visit her. So after much brushing and more misgiving, I started on the venturesome quest alone.

I was ushered into a very handsome room, furnished with greater regard to comfort than to

splendour, yet deficient in none of the refinements of modern elegance. It was not so French as the parlour in which Miss Ebrington and her aunt received morning visitors. There were fewer mirrors and less bijouterie; but there were good pictures and elegant books, writing materials and work-baskets—and in the midst of all, a young lady in a plain white morning-dress, with her brown hair simply arranged, and her finger garnished with a golden ornament called a thimble—an article which I had never yet observed among the manifold decorations of Miss Ebrington's snow-white hands. I was happy to observe that the variety of suggestive objects which lined the room on every side afforded some security against those awful pauses which sometimes occur in the colloquies sublime of young ladies and their morning beaux. And this, with the simple and unaffected manner of Miss Walton, helped to rid me of a portion of the embarrassment which I had been dreading.

I had time to draw conclusions while the young lady was looking at the superscriptions of the various letters contained in the parcel I had brought her—letters probably as important as young ladies' correspondence usually is, and which, judging from their variety of outside, I concluded to have come from cousins of all ages. After this glance at the externals of her despatches, Miss Walton inclined herself very graciously to the little I could find to say, and contributed a generous share to the conversation, which I felt irresistibly impelled to continue, without remembering to consider what sort of a figure I was making.

But in a few minutes—at least but few by my computation—a sharp ring at the door announced an impetuous visitor; and before I could gather myself together for a parting bow, Miss Prynne was announced, and she followed so close upon the servant's heels, that he had nearly trodden on her as he turned to make way for her entrance. The room was so darkened, à la mode de New York, that I passed unnoticed in my corner.

"My dear Miss Walton," said the lady, with the most pucker'd mouth possible, "my dear Miss Walton, how do you do this morning? I know how you must feel, but I am delighted to find that you are not so much overcome as I had feared. From your intimacy with that miserable girl, I was dreading to find you entirely overwhelmed. But you are right, quite right! She is not worthy of your notice or concern. Oh! what a hypocrite! This comes of all her quiet elegance, her fastidiousness, her ——"

Here the lady made her first pause, and drew her mouth up into a mere button hole in her endeavour to find terms sufficiently expressive. This auspicious interval gave Miss Walton an opportunity to edge in an exclamation—

"What can you mean? Pray, explain, for I am entirely ignorant ——"

"Ignorant!" exclaimed Miss Prynne, throwing up both hands and both eyes in an agony of astonishment; "are you the last to hear what the whole town rings with? Well! this is worse even than I supposed. You! her most intimate friend! I came to condole with you, little supposing I was to be the bearer of evil tidings! Can it be that you are yet to learn that your bosom friend, Lucilla Farley, has eloped in the most disgraceful manner?"

"Yes indeed," said Miss Walton; "but ——"

"Yes, it is but too true; and with her father's clerk—a mere nobody. And to think that she should not even have confided in *you*, and given you an opportunity to dissuade her from rushing on ruin. Oh! it is too much! I never was so shocked in my life! I can tell you all about it ——"

But here the door opened suddenly, for we had not heard the bell—indeed, the fire bells might have rung unheard while Miss Prynne was speaking,—and in came two ladies, Mrs. Lamkin and—Miss Ebrington.

"My dear Isabella," said Mrs. Lamkin, in tones of the most overcoming softness and pathos, "my heart bleeds for you. I have but just heard the particulars of this melancholy affair from Miss Ebrington, and we flew to offer you our sympathy, knowing how you must suffer."

Here Mrs. Lamkin threw down her eyelids pathetically, and wiped her lips with a transparent *mouchoir brodé*.

"I do assure you—" began Miss Walton, with great earnestness.

"Oh! you need not assure us," said all three ladies at once.

"Nobody supposes," continued Miss Ebrington, who had been too earnest to recognize me as I sat with my back to what little light there was, "nobody suspects you could be guilty of assisting in so degrading an affair. For my part, I am not so much surprised at it as some people are. I always knew there was deception in that meek, saint-like countenance. I always distrust your pattern-people." (I had heard her say the same of Miss Walton.) "Only think how Lucilla Farley has been held up as a model of duty and affection! Scarcely a party did she attend last winter because her father's health did not allow of his going out in the evening, and this wonderfully good daughter must stay at home to keep him company! It is well recollected now by many people that this young man—this Worthington—was always sure to be there in the evening, on some pretence or other; and so Miss Lucilla's sacrifices are all very satisfactorily accounted for! Oh! it is most amusing! The poor father was only a blind; and he, believing her to be all that was excellent, never suspected her

duplicity. Poor old soul! his gray hairs will go down ——"

Here enters Mrs. Wentworth, a lady in whose eye sat something which did not promise to submit as patiently to interruption as Miss Walton had done. But the torrent of Miss Ebrington's virtuous indignation suffered scarcely a momentary check as Mrs. Wentworth took her seat.

"Poor Mr. Farley," continued my volatile friend, who evidently considered the floor as still her own, "poor Mr. Farley had not the least suspicion of any attachment when he found she was gone, and had even sent off her trunks while he was at the country house. He was like a distracted man they say. He tore his hair, and ——"

"He wears a wig," observed Mrs. Wentworth, quietly.

"Well, his wig then," persisted Miss Ebrington. "Be that as it may, he is beside himself with grief and mortification. They say it is absolutely heart-rending to hear him crying, 'My daughter! oh, my daughter!' The housekeeper was so much alarmed at his distressing condition, that she sent for the bishop. A friend of mine saw him go in, so there is no mistake about that!"

"Ah no!" began Miss Prynne, who felt that she had been most unjustly treated by Miss Ebrington in this long speech; "ah no! it is all but too true! And it is feared by some that the misguided girl is not even married ——"

"This is too much, really," said Mrs. Wentworth, in a tone of more energy and even command than Miss Walton had ventured to assume in her various attempts to be heard. "You must allow me, ladies, to set you right in this matter."

Then taking from her pocket a scrap cut from a newspaper, she read aloud—

"Married, on Tuesday evening last, by the Right Reverend Bishop ——, William Worthington to Lucilla, only daughter of Edward Farley, Esq."

There was silence for full half a minute. But Miss Prynne was nothing daunted.

"I don't know what that can mean," she said. "I had my information from the best authority."

"Oh! poor old man, what could he do," charitably interposed Miss Ebrington. "She is his only child—her character at stake—what could he do better than have them married? For my part, I pity him from my heart."

"So do I, I am sure," said the silver-tongued Mrs. Lamkin; "and it is rumoured that the worst of this sad business is not yet known. A friend of mine, whose brother-in-law is a director in one of the banks, told me in confidence, (of course I would not wish it to go any further,) that considerable apprehension is entertained that all the checks purporting to be Mr. Farley's that have been paid during the past week are not genuine! This would indeed ——"

"Allow me to correct this mistake," said the gentle Isabella, with a sweet smile and a sweeter blush, though she had evidently gained courage

from the presence of Mrs. Wentworth. "My friend was married with the full consent and approbation of her father. I had the pleasure and honour of being her bridesmaid, and yesterday morning parted with her on board the steamer which was to convey her to the Liverpool packet."

The ladies received this announcement with various grace, but none ventured to reply till Miss Ebrington said—

"Well, he was nothing but her father's clerk at any rate!"

Here Mrs. Wentworth again came to the rescue, reading from another scrap of newspaper an announcement of a partnership between Edward Farley and William Worthington.

At this very awkward conjuncture, a young gentleman, with something of the dandy, but more of the quiz in his manner, dashed into the room, and mingled with his salutations the information that he had a note for Miss Walton which had been brought up by the pilot. Fortunately, Mr. Merriman was a very rapid speaker, or he would have found it impossible to say thus much.

"Mr. Merriman!" began two or three of the ladies, "didn't you tell me that Lucilla Farley had eloped with her father's clerk?"

"No, ma'am," said the gentleman, with an amusing air of meekness. "I told you she had gone off, which was strictly true, for the bridegroom was her father's clerk until to-day, as I presume the papers ——"

"Oh yes! we have heard ——"

"But sir, you insinuated ——"

"Yes, I understood you ——"

"Oh! perhaps I might shrug my shoulders, raise my eye-brows, or shake my head thus, but there is nothing actionable in those movements, however expressive; and I have so often seen you ladies use them with effect, that I may have been ambitious to try my powers a little. I merely got up this little afterpiece as some compensation for the rare wedding we were cheated out of by their sudden departure."

My friend and her companions did not receive this acknowledgment very amiably.

"But," said Miss Ebrington, who seemed determined to die in the last ditch, "if there was nothing wrong, why was the matter kept such a profound secret?"

"Oh, they were not to have been married until next winter," said Mr. Merriman, who seemed to feel a little penitent, and rather upon honour to set the thing straight at last;—"that was the original plan; but some business of the house requiring that a confidential person should be sent to Europe, my uncle Farley proposed that his partner that was to be should undertake the voyage, to which he agreed with the trifling proviso that the fair Lucilla accompanied him as Mrs. Worthington. My uncle poh-poh'd a good deal at first, but after a little deliberation consented, and granted a year's furlough for a trip to the Continent. Old Mr. Worthington came up to the wedding, and what is better, came down

with a handsome sum for his son's share of the concern. It was only agreed upon last week, and it came off on Tuesday, before any body but those in the secret suspected a word of the matter. Now I do assure you, ladies, I have told the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, without a single shrug, nod, wink or innuendo."

"But you have not told us how the bride's consent to this sudden affair was obtained," said Mrs. Wentworth, who seemed really sorry for the mortification of the kind trio.

"Oh, I leave that to the bridesmaid," said Mr. Merriman.

Miss Walton seconded the attempt of Mrs. Wentworth to relieve the embarrassment of her crest-fallen visitors, by showing a splendid bracelet which had been the bride's parting present to herself. But it was all in vain. The ladies were unable to rally their spirits, and poor Miss Ebrington looked absolutely ugly. As she rose to depart, I arose too; and I shall never forget the start she gave as she recognized me. It was evident that she recollects, in that one single instant, all that she had said to me of Miss Walton, and all the fine sentiments she had uttered in the course of our acquaintance.

As for myself, I had been sitting in the dark, while Miss Ebrington had been shedding a flood of light upon her own character. Light may be so brilliant as to be painful, and I confess I found this so. The rose-tinted medium through which I had contemplated this young lady, disappeared from that morning; and she was too practised an observer not to notice the change. She saw that I was disenchanted, and she evidently felt a little unamiable on the subject. I considered with myself what would be the fitting proceeding in the premises, and the result of my cogitations was the present of a splendid piece of French bijouterie for the aunt's centre-table, and what the ladies call "a love of a veil,"—the handsomest I could find,—for my quondam flame. These having been graciously accepted, I considered my amende to be equal to the occasion; and the next morning before breakfast my luggage and myself were transferred to a boarding-house, where a timid bachelor friend assured me they never took young ladies.

Safe in this rare retreat, there was evidently no danger of a conspiracy against my liberty. Why then could I not exult in my secure position, and keep out of harm's way? Ah! that fatal visit! That plain morning dress! That thimble! My hour was come, and all that was left me was to fall gracefully.

How long it took me to win Isabella Walton I shall not disclose; but we were quite ready to be married when Mr. and Mrs. Worthington returned to grace the occasion with their presence. I was relieved from the anguish of seeing Miss Ebrington inconsolable for my desertion, by the occurrence of her marriage with a widower of sixty, who by dint of thorough dressing, and dashing manners, was looked upon (by the ladies) as a man of fortune;

but who in reality was attracted by the same appearances about my fair friend, and equally disappointed with herself to find that appearance was all. They lived together awhile, as such people

may, but separated before long, as such people do; and the last I heard of my original charmer, was in the character of companion to a lady about to travel in Europe.

L U C Y F R A N K L I N .

BY MRS. EMMA C. EMBURY.

THERE is no beautifier like happiness—no cosmetic equal to a cheerful temper. “A merry heart,” says Solomon, “doeth good like a medicine,” and why then should it not exert, as I maintain it does, a beneficial effect upon the complexion.

Never was there a more hopelessly ugly child than poor little Lucy Franklin. She was one of those thin, scrawny-looking creatures, who seem to be all bones and ligaments;—her skin was the colour of dingy parchment, except when the frequent blush imparted a livid hue to cheeks which were never tinged with the rose; her mouth was enormously wide, and her great black eyes, which might have been fine in any other face, only gave an elfish expression to her countenance, while her jet black hair cropped close to her head, had a most inveterate propensity to stand out in all directions, as if every individual hair had set up for itself. A nervous twist of her shoulders when she walked, and a habit of dropping her under jaw when she met the eyes of any one, which were the results of timidity and shyness, certainly added no charms to her unfortunate person. Yes, Lucy was hopelessly ugly.

However one may moralize about the matter, the fact is not to be doubted that a handsome face is always a letter of recommendation, and never was such an advantage more needed than in the case of poor little Lucy. Left an orphan at seven years of age, Lucy had inherited only her robust father’s swarthy complexion, and her pretty mother’s delicate constitution. She had neither the health which could enable her to work for her bread, or the beauty which could awaken interest in the hearts of strangers; and but for the kindness and a sort of family pride in her mother’s cousin, who was her only living relative, she would have been consigned to the care of some public charity. Mr. Leighton, her benefactor, was a close and narrow-minded but not an unfeeling man. He pitied the condition of the little orphan, and without consulting his wife, of whose sympathy with his benevolent impulses he had no little doubt, he determined to give her a home at least until some provision could be made for her support. Lucy was too much overwhelmed with grief to take much heed of the manner in which she was received when she entered her new abode; but she often remembered, in after years, the half-expressed anger, the determined sullenness and the grudging hospitality of her cousin’s wife.

Mrs. Leighton was one of those very commonplace women whose mission seems to be merely to replenish the earth. This she undoubtedly ful-

filled, for eight sturdy children, as noisy as health and spirits could make them, already circled the household fire. She never puzzled her brains to discover the “whole duty of man;” but to her mind the whole duty of woman consisting in taking good care of the baby. Scolding the servants, fretting at children, lecturing her husband, and worrying about housekeeping, she looked upon as the minor duties of life, which she by no means neglected. Her house was as neat as a paper of new pins; her children were always clean and well-dressed, and her domestic affairs were most carefully looked after;—her only mistake was in the manner of accomplishing these desirable ends. There was no system in Mrs. Leighton’s mind, and of course there could be none in the government of her little domain. Instead of arranging her household so that the whole machinery would go on smoothly without the jarring of a single wheel under her judicious supervision, she took an especial pride in feeling that her actual presence was essential at every part of the engine. She wanted to adjust all its complications, and set it in operation with her own hand. The consequence was that every day began with bustle, tumult and hurry, while every evening closed in weariness and discontent. The ill-temper of the perplexed and hurried servants, the turbulence of the capriciously indulged and thwarted children, and the scolding, driving, anxious carefulness of the mistress, made the household a very excellent specimen of that state of domestic chaos which the Irish designate by the expressive phrase “*Through-other-ness.*”

In such a home Lucy was likely to find little sympathy or appreciation. Naturally timid in character, and now oppressed with a bitter sense of loneliness and bereavement, she shrunk from the noisy gaiety of the children, whom she was soon taught she must not venture to regard as relatives. Mrs. Leighton was not disposed to give any thing without receiving its full value; and when she found her husband determined to befriend the poor child, she resolved to do so at the least possible expense. Accordingly, Lucy was furnished with the children’s cast off dresses; and before she had recovered from her torpor of grief she had been reduced to the condition of that universal scapegoat in a large family—“*the little bound-girl.*” She had been the darling of her sickly mother; and though after the death of her father, poverty had been her only birthright, yet the tenderness of her sorrowing parent had veiled its harsher features from her view. But she now learned the full bitterness of her position. She was a shy and timid child, but there was

a degree of self-respect in her character which was remarkable in one so young, and which, if properly directed, would have been one of the most efficient of all instruments in training her mind to virtue and nobleness. In her present condition, however, the effect of such a trait was decidedly injurious. A sense of outward inferiority was continually struggling in her heart with a consciousness of real equality, until a sort of sullen reserve, especially unlovely in early youth, was imparted to her nature.

Mr. Leighton noticed that she was warmly clad, and that if she did not eat heartily it should not be for want of a well-filled plate at table; but beyond this he gave himself no concern. He had afforded her a home, and he knew she was not ill-treated; therefore his conscience acquitted him of all further duty towards her. So Lucy grew up a thin, sallow, unhappy-looking creature, who did as she was bid, and moved mechanically to the will of others. No one cared any thing about her, except so far as to exact services from her;—no one interested themselves in her comfort or amusement. She was expected to do the lighter drudgery of the kitchen and nursery; and, when this was accomplished, a task of needlework employed her until bedtime,—her task being only varied by the pleasure of amusing a cross baby.

Even "Sunday beamed no Sabbath" to poor Lucy. To make amends for the loss of an hour of Monday morning, when she always rose early lest the servants should be idle on the momentous occasion of the *weekly wash*, Mrs. Leighton usually indulged herself with late slumbers on Sunday. A late and hurried breakfast is not generally a help to devotion, and by the time the lady and her children were ready for church, Lucy was sufficiently weary of the turmoil to be glad when she found herself alone with "the baby." Sometimes, however, Lucy was indulged with the privilege of going to church herself, which generally happened when Mrs. Leighton found herself uncomfortably drowsy after a hearty dinner, and preferred a half-dreamy slumber beside the cradle to the exercises of the sanctuary. Mrs. Leighton meant to be very conscientious, and upright and correct in her whole course of life, and she would have been shocked if it had been suggested to her that she was unjust and unkind to the poor orphan. She was only a well-meaning but selfish woman, utterly ignorant of the wants and exigencies of the soul, and only regardful of the demands of physical comfort.

When Lucy was twelve years old, Mr. Leighton suddenly conceived the idea that she ought to receive some education. She had learned to read and write under the instructions of her mother, but since her death, it had only been at intervals stolen from continuous duties or needful rest, that Lucy had been able to indulge her fondness for books. It was now decided, however, that she should be a half-pay scholar in the academy where five hopeless scions of the Leighton stock were already undergoing the process of indoctrination. It was a gleam

of light upon Lucy's lot, but it soon passed away. She was only allowed to attend school half the day, and when by her application she really made such amends for this privation that she was entitled to take rank above her fellow-pupils, she found that the curse of poverty clung to her even amid the influences of intellectual culture. The poor orphan girl was not allowed to take precedence of the rich though stupid scholar; and, at length, disgusted and disheartened, Lucy lost all interest in herself. With a sort of sullen resignation, she submitted to her destiny; and crushing within her the aspirations of a high nature and the impulses of a loving heart, long before she could either understand or analyze her feelings, she became the mere machine, the poor relation, earning her food and raiment by the toil of her hands, and eating her bread in the sweat of her heart if not of her brow.

Time passed on until Lucy had counted her seventeenth birthday. Ten years of bitter thraldom, of soul-wearing bondage, had she suffered since she looked her last upon the mother whose memory she still idolized. The little ugly child had grown up into the dark, awkward, and not less ugly maiden. Her hands were hardened by household toil; her form was bent from habitual stooping over her needle, and a listless air of indifference pervaded her whole appearance. Her sallow skin showed no trace of quick emotion, her eyes were usually veiled by her heavy lids, whose long lashes only threw a deeper shadow over her hollow cheek; and the expression of fixed and almost stern melancholy which marked her pale compressed lips, made her countenance positively repulsive.

Such was Lucy Franklin when I accidentally met her at a country house where I had taken board for the summer. She was in attendance upon one of Mrs. Leighton's children, a wayward and fretful boy of ten years of age, who was suffering from a painful and incurable lameness. Country air had been recommended by his physician, and as his mother was far too notable to be long absent from home, Lucy was sent to take care of him. The patience and judicious management of the young nurse awakened my interest, notwithstanding the repulsive expression of her countenance; but when I ventured to address her on the subject of her little charge, I was puzzled by the cold indifference which she exhibited. I had supposed she must dearly love the child to whom she devoted so much time and care, but what was my surprise to find she was merely performing a mechanical duty. She was like one whose heart did not animate their frame—like an automaton wound up to perform a certain part, but equally insensible to the praise or blame which the performance might obtain. I was puzzled beyond measure. It was to me a new phase in human nature, and I had nearly come to the conclusion that Lucy was a sort of an anomaly—a woman without vanity, without sentiment, and without capacity for any affection.

Among the inmates of the pleasant and retired

mansion where we had found refuge from the discomforts of the city, was a maiden lady, considerably past middle age, who had been for years a confirmed invalid. Miss Marian S—— had been exceedingly beautiful, and her countenance still retained traces of her early charms. Descended from one of the old Dutch families, who form the only true aristocracy of the empire state, she had always been accustomed to the refinement of the best society, while a competent fortune enabled her to indulge all her elegant tastes. Possessed of a highly cultivated mind and finished manners, she had learned to find resources within herself to reconcile her to the privations of her present condition. While in the prime of womanhood, renowned for her beauty and grace, she was rendered an invalid for life by the fall of a heavy chandelier in a ball-room, which almost crushed her beneath its weight, while she was dancing with her affianced lover. The injury at first seemed comparatively slight, but it was productive of serious results; and the most excruciating pains, accompanied by a gradual distortion of her fine figure, showed the fearful effects of the accident. It was an awful trial for one who had heretofore known nothing of life but its enjoyments, and who had thus suddenly exchanged the triumphs of the ball-room for the weary monotony of the sick-chamber. But Marian S—— was a creature of noble nature. She bore her sufferings patiently and meekly. Once only did her courage fail, and this happened when she broke the bonds which united her to the object of her early love. In vain did he sue to be allowed to watch over her future life, even if it were only to share and soothe her pangs. Marian was too unselfish to allow his life to be wasted in a vain affection; and as soon as her disease was pronounced incurable, she wisely decided to free him from the ties of honour which bound him. The result showed the wisdom of her self-forgetting goodness. Her lover vowed eternal constancy, but Time offers healing medicaments to most hearts, and after the lapse of a few years, he found one, less lovely, and, it may be, less beloved than Marian had been, who could yet minister to his happiness.

How much the sacrifice had cost Marian no one ever knew; but she had loved as devotedly as a high and noble nature can, and such feelings are not to be put off as lightly as a worn-out garment. When her lover married, Marian found means to become the friend of his gentle wife; and though he was rarely admitted to the presence of her whom he had once loved, yet the sweet child-like creature who now looked up to him for happiness, was the unconscious pupil of her who had undergone the discipline of sorrow; and much of the calm joy of his after life did he trace to the pure influence of Marian's noble affection.

Years had meliorated Marian's bodily sufferings, while they had increased the outward evidence of her misfortune. She was now dwarfed and deformed in person, but with a face full of sweetness* and holy resignation. She lived in handsome style

in the homestead near Albany, with an only brother, who, though several years her junior, had resisted all the allurements of society in order to devote himself to her comfort. Some old family servants, the last remains of that system of domestic servitude which prevailed with such happy influence in the northern states during the simpler days of the Republic, managed the concerns of the household, and in the gratification of her affectionate and benevolent impulses, Miss Marian (as she was usually styled by those admitted to the privileges of friendship) found solace and even happiness. The attention of this lady had early been called towards Lucy Franklin, but she had drawn her inferences more wisely than I had done. I had not seen enough of sorrow to know its paralyzing effects, but the patient invalid had been too often the confidant of heart-grieves, and had too sympathetic a nature to be in doubt as to the evidences of habitual suffering. She read Lucy's nature with the clear eye of one who was a sage in all sorrowful lore. She saw that the light within her was shrouded in thick darkness, but she knew it was not extinguished. Her benevolent heart grieved over the weary servitude which had thus made a living soul only as a beast of burden, and had crushed its striving impulses beneath a weight of petty cares and iron duties. She sought to win the confidence and awaken the kindly feelings of the orphan girl, but the task was one of no little difficulty, for Lucy had so long lived alone, and so long subdued every instinct of her nature, that she had become almost content with her own torpidity.

But no one could be long insensible to the sweet pleading tones of Miss Marian's voice, or to the persuasive eloquence of her words. She managed to render herself indebted to Lucy for some little kindness, well knowing that nothing so soon awakens a high nature as a sense of its duties to others. Lucy became conscious of a pleasure she had never before known, in proferring this unbought and gratefully received service to the afflicted lady. Miss Marian's manner towards her was so delicate, so full of appreciation and interest, that the poor girl's long dormant self-respect was aroused, and her sullen individuality was suddenly exchanged for an almost cheerful consciousness of sympathy with one, at least, of God's creatures.

Ere the season came for separation, Lucy had learned to regard Miss Marian with a degree of tenderness which she knew not existed in her heart, and the hour of parting was one of intense grief to the lonely hearted girl. Miss S—— returned to her pleasant abode on the banks of the Hudson; I resumed the duties of my quiet home, and Lucy again became the "hewer of wood and drawer of water" in Mrs. Leighton's turbulent household.

* * * * *

In the summer of 18—, some ten years after my first and only acquaintance with Lucy Franklin, I was sojourning at Lebanon for the benefit of its warm baths, when a large and gay party arrived

there from Albany. Every body becomes inspired with curiosity at a watering place; and, I must confess, I felt some anxiety to know who these people were, especially as I was much struck with the beauty of one of the ladies. She sat opposite me at dinner, and I could scarcely restrain the impulse which led me to gaze on her noble face. To so passionate an admirer of the beautiful, either in animate or inanimate nature, much ought to be forgiven, but unfortunately society makes no such nice distinctions, and I was therefore obliged to be discreet in order to avoid seeming impolite. She was a superb creature, in the very prime of womanhood, with a fine oval face, flashing black eyes, and glossy raven hair folded smoothly around a head which would have charmed a phrenologist. A critic eye might have discovered that her mouth was too wide, but its frank expression and its wealth of glittering teeth made amends for its slight want of symmetry. Her form was tall and stately, but with a slight bend at the shoulders, which gave a kind of willowy gracefulness to a figure that else had been almost too queenly. As I looked upon her beauty, a vague feeling of recognition stole over me, as if I had seen that face in some by-past dream; and when she spoke, her voice seemed to strike the chord of memory, yet I was sure I had never before heard those ringing tones of glee.

I soon discovered (women soon detect these things) that she was married; but I saw no one in the whole party worthy to be her husband, except one fine-looking man whose noble bearing and classically moulded face made me almost forget to observe his gray hairs. He appeared nearly double her age, yet he was the only one who possessed sufficient intellectuality and lostness of physiognomy to be her equal. My womanly perceptions aided me to divine the truth. The elderly gentleman was indeed the husband of my beauty, and he was nearly double her age; for she had only counted her seven-and-twentieth summer, while he, alas! was "fifty, or by'r lady inclining t'ward threescore." Yet she loved him earnestly and tenderly, and had bestowed on him the pure, deep fulness of an unwasted heart. I heard the story afterwards from dear, good Miss Marian—for who do you suppose my beauty really was, gentle reader? It was Lucy Franklin,—the poor little drudge—*ugly Lucy!*

What had wrought such a transformation?—you ask. It was the beautifying power of happiness, my friend. Content had loosened the foldings of her pale lips; peace had smoothed her contracted brow; the quiet joy of appreciated affection had lighted up her fine eyes; health had filled out her sunken cheeks; exercise had strengthened the bowed and drooping form; and all these things combined, had cleared the sickly complexion, and tinted it with the deep, rich rose-hue which is so beautiful on the cheek and lip of the brunette. It was marvellous, but it was true. Happiness had been a better beautifier than all the cosmetics and freckle-washes in the world, for it had awakened the healthful pulsations of a torpid heart.

Lucy's story is soon told, and, as Miss Marian said, "there is not much in it, after all." Her new friend determined to rescue her from the dull stagnation of intellect and feeling to which she seemed condemned, and accordingly proposed to Mrs. Leighton to take upon herself the future charge of Lucy's fortunes. This, after some little demur on account of the loss of Lucy's services, was finally agreed upon, and the orphan exchanged the grudging charity which had exacted its full reward for the frank and cordial beneficence of a noble spirit. As an inmate of Marian's household, Lucy found herself in a new world. Her heart and mind were rapidly developed, for affection was the talisman which broke her long slumber of the soul. Self-respect taught her what were her duties and her deficiencies, while a quick comprehension and untiring industry enabled her to overcome the disadvantages of early ignorance.

Mr. S—— was not less interested than was his sister, in the friendless and neglected girl. He was a speculative philosopher, and the development of the human character was a subject of deep interest to him, but he had never before enjoyed the opportunity of watching the quick expansion of soul in one past the age of childhood; therefore, it is scarcely a matter of wonder that he should have watched over Lucy as he would have marked the growth and blossoming of some rare flower. But such things are not like the fanciful dreams of some vague theory. When men study philosophy in women's labyrinthine hearts and astronomy in their starry eyes, they are apt to become strangely perplexed between the material and the spiritual. The grave student of books and men had little idea, however, of the nature of his own feelings, until he was called to act the part of guardian to his young pupil.

Lucy's beauty had attracted much notice in the society to which Miss Marian had introduced her, and as her birth offered no obstacle to any alliance, her hand was more than once sought by the most unexceptionable suitors. To all these Lucy returned a decided refusal; but one of her lovers, who possessed a considerable share of Dutch pertinacity, was not to be thus easily dismissed. He applied to Mr. S——, and begged him to use his influence with the lady. At first Mr. S—— felt strongly disposed to resent this request as an insult, but a moment's reflection showed him the folly of such an impulse. The more he looked into his own heart, the more appalled did he feel at the infatuation which now possessed him; but this only determined him to be firm in the fulfilment of his duty towards Lucy, and to advise her to marry a man who could make her happy, even if his own heart rose up in rebellion while he spoke.

I don't know how it happened, and I doubt whether Miss Marian ever clearly understood the matter, but certain it is, that after a long and agitating interview between Mr. S—— and Lucy, the lover was formally dismissed. Not long after, it was known in the circles of fashion that Lucy

Franklin was the affianced bride of the somewhat elderly brother of her benefactress; but how he ever brought himself to the recognition of his own

feelings, or how Lucy managed to disclose to him the long-cherished affection which had grown out of her gratitude, yet remains a secret.

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THE COLLEGE BOY.

MISS C M SEDGWICK

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THE COLLEGE BOY.

BY MISS C. M. SEDGWICK.

"What song doth the cricket sing?
What news doth the swallow bring?
What doth laughing boyhood tell?
What calls out the marriage bell?

"Is it mirth? Then why will man
Spoil the sweet song all he can?
Bid him rather, aye, rejoice
With a kind and a merry voice!"—BARRY CORNWALL.

"FATHER, father, won't you speak to Harley; he torments us so?" cried little Mary Oliphant to her father. "He kisses us just to torment us!"

Mr. Oliphant was reading his newspaper, and gave no heed to an outbreak very common at his fireside; and Harley repeated the offence, saying, as he kissed the little girls first on one round ruddy cheek and then on the other—

"Mary, my dear, do not you remember the rule, 'When you are smitten on one cheek turn the other?'"

"Oh Harley!" replied Mary, bridling with a dignity which a treacherous smile on her lips betrayed, "that is worse than kissing, to quote Scripture so."

"How, Mary? Did I not quote it right?"

"You know well enough what I mean, Harley."

"So you do, Harley," and "so you do," said the half dozen little Oliphants in a breath; and Jessie, the eldest, a girl of thirteen, said—

"You know very well, Harley, that it is very wrong to quote Scripture upon such occasions."

"What occasions did you allude to, Jessie?" asked Harley, passing around the circle of girls and snatching a kiss from each on forehead, cheek, ear, or back of the neck, as chance served him.

"Oh! you are too bad, Harley!" "I never!" and "how provoking!" broke from each, as each according to her humour, tossed her head, looked vexed, or broke into an irrepressible laugh.

"What is all this cackling about?" asked Mr. Oliphant, laying aside his paper.

The children told their grievances, and Harley insisted he was the injured person, defrauded of his just rights. Mr. Oliphant proposed a compromise, and Jessie and Harley concluded on the terms. Harley was to be entitled to two kisses a day levied on each of the girls, when and where he pleased. If he exceeded this allowance, he forfeited his right of forage; and if they denied this limited requisition, all restrictions upon Harley were abolished.

The next day was Sunday. Mr. Oliphant was detained from church by a cold, and the young people went to the sanctuary without any elder friend to watch over them. Their mother had died two years before, and their father was in the habit

of confiding in their self-regulation—a mode of discipline better than the most watchful eye. Little disgraces and failures may occur, but there is a rectifying principle that brings all out right at last. We venture this remark upon an occasion that rather favours the Martinet system of education.

We presume our readers to be acquainted with the severe decorum of a village church, where during the prayer in our congregational meeting, no sound is heard but the voice of the minister. Hemming, coughing, sneezing, and their usual accompaniments, are suppressed. The body is immovable, but unfortunately not in an attitude of devotion, as our stern Puritan forefathers threw away the kernel with the chaff of external observances. The men uniformly stand upright, and some among them relieve the tediousness of a fixed and uneasy posture by giving full liberty to the eye, so that if a poor little delinquent wickedly or unwarily offends against the proprieties of the place, he soon feels himself a sort of burning-glass, a focus where all these wandering eyes meet.

The minister of —— was approaching the close of his long prayer, when Harley, assured he should miss the opportunity of a bit of mischief he was preparing, leaned over the two girls who intervened between him and Jessie, his eye flashing fun, and the rest of his face as grave as if he were asking for a psalm book, and said—

"Now, Jessie, my kiss!"

"Harley!" breathed Jessie.

It was but a breath, but it would have repressed any less devoted lover of mischief than Harley; but nothing daunted, he repeated—

"My kiss, Jessie. Keep your promise, Jessie. Jessie, my kiss!"

Still Jessie kept her countenance, save a little twitching of the corners of her mouth. The young girls began to titter. Jessie covered her face; she felt that eyes, blue, black, and gray were upon her; but in spite of her terror and indignation at Harley, she began to shake with laughter. Harley sat down convulsed, and stuffed his handkerchief into his mouth. The poor little girls tried their best, but in spite of them the sounds, a strange mixture of horror and mirth, would swell up and burst out.

They were low, and manifestly involuntary; still the children were sure they were heard to the farthest corner of the church; and when the prayer closed, and they composed themselves sufficiently to look up, they were surprised to find the clergyman was not looking at them, and that every thing was going on as usual without an earthquake or a thunderbolt. Harley appeared singularly attentive to the discourse. Jessie's face was flushed, and her restless eye turned from the preacher to the children in evident distress, lest there should be a recurrence of the disgraceful scene.

"Disgraceful you know it was, Harley," she said, as the little group drew apart from the congregation at the church door and proceeded homeward.

"It was shocking," said Harley. "What in the world were you all laughing at? They say laughing is catching, and I declare to you I had a great mind to go away into Miss Osborne's pew lest I should take it."

"Oh! Harley, Harley!" cried out the little girls upon him; "you are the horridest boy I ever knew."

In spite of this denunciatory language, they all hovered around him two at each hand. Miss Jessie alone was dignified, and after whispering to each of the younger children a caution to say nothing at home of what had passed at church, she turned the corner of the street and left them. She herself proceeded to the clergyman's house, and with much trepidation and many blushes, begged his forgiveness. The good man said mildly to her that it was against the sacred place, and not against him she had offended.

"Oh, I know it very well," she said; "that is the worst of it; but we have been disrespectful to you and to the congregation, and I of all was most to blame, for I should have set my sisters a better example."

"You should, my dear; and since you see your fault and are sorry for it, you will I trust hereafter. I am glad Harley Dayton behaved with propriety. He is not always so considerate, though he should be, as he is some years older than you, I believe, Miss Jessie."

"Only two, sir."

"Well, two years is a considerable advance upon your short lives."

"But boys, sir, are always so much wilder than girls."

"Some boys than some girls," he replied, smiling significantly; and Jessie hastened away, anxious to escape a conversation that might lead to an implication of Harley.

The scene of childhood we have described may seem better adapted to a juvenile miscellany than to readers pampered with romantic incident. But besides that, we deem it well for those who feed daily on such exquisite refinements as *Paté de Foie Gras*, &c., now and then to have a regimen of water-gruel. We think, besides, that a specimen of childhood shows the elements of the mature

character. We see the warp and woof before it receives a dye, and is woven into complicated figures. This dyeing and weaving is but the type of the events of life, and the conventionalisms of society.

Harley Dayton had been adopted so early into the family of Mr. Oliphant, that he remembered no other home, and no possible circumstances could have made any home happier to him. His father was an Irish gentleman without relatives in this country. More generous than wise, he had wrecked a large fortune in a futile attempt to save mercantile friends from bankruptcy; and when he died and left a child of three years, Mr. Oliphant took the boy to his own home, gathered up the fragments of his father's fortune, and invested it for Harley's education. It was enough to secure that, and his independence till the working day of life began. Harley's mother had died at his birth, and his ardent affections were all transferred to the Oliphants.

Mr. Oliphant was a man whom all young creatures professed to love next to their own father, whom many loved better. He was indulgent to all God's creatures but himself. Perhaps we should except too, as part and parcel of himself, his children and Harley, who was scarcely less dear to him than they. He was so earnestly desirous of their excellence, so jealous of their least deviation from right, so fearful of himself, that he might in judging between them and others be swayed by his affections, that it was not very uncommon for him to be in relation to them strict almost to injustice. This imperfection of a noble nature was most conspicuous towards Harley. In assuming the care of the boy, he felt responsible for his good conduct. Harley had a fine intellect, an ingenuous temper, and warm affections, but he was gay, rash, and heedless. Mr. Oliphant held up to him the highest standards, and expected him at once to form himself by them. He had not patience to wait for the growth, and gradual ripening to the strength and sedateness of manhood. He was irritated by every wasted opportunity and impulsive deviation from the straight onward path. Youth must return upon its footsteps; learn caution from its own stumbling, perseverance from its own loitering, and draw the pearl of prudence from the sea of its own folly. There is no hereditary experience—there is no borrowing that gold. Each man must work it out for himself with much toil and frequent failure; and happy is he if at last it does not prove but a "stern light."

"Patience is a great help," and patience is the great necessity, the greatest help for those who have the care of the young. Let them watch and wait, and keep the lamp of their vigils forever burning—patience and faith will have their reward.

Mr. Oliphant's girls gave him little anxiety. They were of a ductile material, various in their characters, but all gentle and docile; all expanding and thriving in the broad daylight of truth and warm sunshine of a happy home.

Harley was abroad at school, and was cast of necessity upon his own self-direction,—not very safe to an excitable and impulsive character like his; but if a storm arose, the saving strength of the vessel became apparent. He was calm, thoughtful and serious. A mountain stream is not more changed from its bold, noisy career, over rocks and precipices to its subsequent depth and quiet force.

The time came for that dangerous passage in a young man's life—his college-course. At the University, poor Harley's infirmities clung to him like the man of the sea. His scholarship was respectable; his compositions bore the highest mark, and his elocution was unsurpassed; but this availed him little with the Faculty while he was negligent of prescribed observances and the leader of all fun—innocent fun enough but for being ill-timed and out of place. These faults in the eyes of his classmates were but “glittering dew-drops on the lion's mane.” They loved him for his frankness, affectionateness and magnanimity. The Faculty, too, though they frowned upon him officially, loved him in their secret hearts. They could not help it—for when was the best liquor ever vitiated by the sediment that rises in its first fermentation?

The first vacation of Harley's sophomore year was approaching. Perhaps some of our readers may know what the coming home of the dearest member of the family from college is? To pass a winter vacation, too, when every hilarity of the season has been suspended, every promised pleasure has been stored up; when jokes have accumulated to be told, stories to be related, news to be communicated; when each member of the family has contrived a pleasure or prepared a gift for the comier—when to each little heart time seems suspended till the hour of arrival strikes. Perhaps, too, they have known the pang of disappointment; have known what it is to study fearfully the cloud lowering on the brow of the elders; to dread and guess at its mysterious import, and finally to love the dear delinquent all the better—if not for his disgraces, for his misfortunes.

“My dear Harley,” wrote Mr. Oliphant, “we shall see you on Friday. In the meantime I write merely to beg you to pay your bills, and bring me an exact statement of your expenses. You know that I think your temporal salvation depends on exactness and regularity in these matters—independence, justice, truth and honour, on the punctual payment of your debts. Your patrimony is sufficient to take you through college and complete your professional education;—if, after that, you cannot take care of yourself, you must be a poor devil. I love you too well to interpose aid that might prevent the rigorous employment of your energies; or, my dear fellow, the just consequences of your negligence.

“But for a more gracious theme. The vacation is at hand, and we are all preparing for it. Little Fan is saving all her nuts to crack when you come; Kate has put off her birthday till next week; Jessie is working a pair of slippers—for whom she says

not, but Fan slyly remarks they are just your size; and Mary and Ellen have at this moment come down from your room where they have spread a new hearth-rug of their own manufacture, put on your bed a snow-white quilt,—‘because Harley likes a white one,’—and have converted a blanket shawl into a curtain—‘Harley likes curtains so much.’ They are watching their flowers, lest a tea-rose should not bloom and a red-rose should be out of bloom that are destined for your toilet. These, in one sense, are trifles, Harley; but in another, of infinite worth, as the signs of that love which is God's best gift—our immortal treasure.”

“Two letters from Harley!” exclaimed Mary Oliphant, running in from the post-office; “one for you, father, and one for you, Miss Jessie.”

“Two letters from Harley!” echoed Mr. Oliphant, “when he is to be here on Friday. What does this mean?”

“Here is another letter,” said Mary. “I didn't give it to you because I wanted you to read Harley's first.”

Mr. Oliphant took the third letter, and examined the superscription as if there were no other means of finding out whence it came;—he hesitated, guessing too truly at its purport. In the mean time, Jessie had opened and was reading hers. Her cheeks were flushed and her tears dropping fast upon it. Mary turned to her.

“Mercy, Jessie, what is the matter?” she asked. “Is Harley sick—is he dead?”

“He is neither sick nor dead,” replied Mr. Oliphant, throwing down his letters. “It would be better if he were!”

“Oh dear!” sighed Mary, and walked to the window.

Every word from her father sunk like lead into Jessie's heart. “I know,” she thought, “there is nothing worse than Harley has written to me.”

“May I read the president's letter, father?” she asked, with a tremulous voice.

He put it into her hand, and asked if he might read hers from Harley. After a moment's hesitation, she gave it to him. It ran as follows—

“Dearest Jessie—

“I am wretched beyond description—not because I have got into some foolish scrapes here, but that I am not coming home this vacation; that it will be long before I see you and the girls, and more than all, because your father—my more than father—will be offended and distressed and in despair about me. I have been publicly reprimanded and am suspended for the next term, and am to be sent off to Lynton, to the Rev'd Bartimeus Hill, to dig away at my studies instead of having a delightful time with you all! Oh that I had minded the ringing of the bell to morning-prayers! Oh that I had done what I ought to have done, and had left undone what I ought not to have done! Oh that I had left in the chambers of my imagination those villainous caricatures of our grotesque tutor which have brought me into disgrace!

"I have written to your father an exact history of the whole affair. At first he will think me quite as bad as Cain; but I am not, Jessie, nor will he think so long. In the matter of the morning prayers, I do not feel myself much to blame—not half so much as those who insist on maintaining a service nominally religious, to which the boys come shivering and sleepy, merely to save their marks. Many among them go half-dressed and hurry back to their beds, so that it is not even a test of their early rising. If I have been present but nine times during this time, set at least a part of my delinquency down to my disgust at the desecration of a religious service.

"For the caricatures I have no extenuation to offer. My incurable levity betrayed me into drawing them during recitation, and my folly and vanity into permitting them to be passed round the class. I confess the justice of my punishment; and this is proof enough of my humility and contrition, since that punishment involves a prolonged separation from you—from all in my dear home. Did ever a poor orphan outcast find, and having found, forfeit such a home?

"Do not say a word to your father in my behalf. I deserve his displeasure, for I had reasons for straining myself to the utmost to maintain my place. I cannot afford to play the fool. If there be excess now in his anger, I am sure he will be just to me at last. Don't let the girls think me worse than I am; and don't you, dear Jessie, think me better. I do not deserve half the love you have all wasted upon me."

Harley's letter to Mr. Oliphant exactly corresponded with the official letter. He extenuated nothing, nor did he magnify his sense of his offences in order to get the advantage of a rebound.

When Jessie and her father had finished the reading of the letters, Mr. Oliphant walked up and down the room without seeming mollified, saying, as if thinking aloud—

"Such folly! such selfishness! such want of principle!"

"Father," said Jessie, in a tremulous voice, "I do not see a want of principle."

"You don't!—and no selfishness, I suppose. Is there no selfishness in his indulging his indolence at the expense of his standing in college? The fellow has attended morning-prayers but nine times this term, and the whole expense of going to college is sacrificed to the indulgence of lying in bed. Is there no selfishness in this? Is there no want of principle in his corrupting his class by the most outrageous ridicule of their tutor?—in his throwing away the happiness of a whole family to gratify his silly impulses? I don't know what you call want of principle. You young people have morals of your own."

Jessie well knew that her father's "bark was worse than his bite," but she could not help putting in an extenuating plea for Harley.

"I know, father," she said, "that Harley has

been thoughtless and boyish,"—her voice faltered,—"unkind to us, and undutiful to you, dear father."

"Oh, as to that—I don't care about that. Duty, indeed! It's an old-fashioned word, pretty nearly obsolete. You young people have an improved vocabulary of your own."

Jessie could scarcely repress her tears; but she felt that her father was unjust, and her spirit rose.

"I don't know what you mean, sir," she said. "I thought love and duty were stamped together on your children's hearts. I never looked for them in any other vocabulary;—there neither could be effaced without the other were obliterated."

"Jessie, my dear child, I beg your pardon. You and the little girls are as good as children can be. I spoke hastily. I did not mean to complain of my children, but only of Harley."

"Oh! father, is he not one of your children? Have you not always called him so?"

"Till now I have."

"And surely, father, you will not cast him off now. You will not treat him as if he had been guilty of lying, or treachery, or dishonesty, or any thing dishonourable. Surely there is a great gulf between all these and levity, and even the president calls it nothing more than levity."

Mr. Oliphant smiled, and beautiful was that smile in Jessie's eyes.

"You have forgotten, dear," he said, "that Harley desired you not to plead his cause. Well, thank heaven, the boy with all his faults is fair and manly—true to the backbone. We will talk over the matter this evening. I must go to my office now. You go and comfort the children as you best can."

This was enough for Jessie. She went to her task with a lightened heart—but a sad task it was. Mary, who had lingered long enough in the parlour to possess herself of the dismal news from Harley, had already announced it, and that Harley's coming home was deferred for six months. Six months, with a deferred pleasure beyond them, are an eternity to the eager expectation of childhood; but disappointment and loss were swallowed up in sorrow for Harley's disgrace.

Mury was already at her desk, when Jessie entered, writing to Harley; Ellen was knitting away at her purse that she might send it to him; Kate declared she would never have another birthday,—"a birthday would be hateful without Harley,"—and little Fan, the gentlest and tenderest of mortals, laid her cheek wet with tears to Jessie's, and whispered, "What a pity that Harley did not say nine prayers!"

Oh love!—domestic love!—who can measure its height or its depth? Who can estimate its preserving and purifying power? It sends an ever swelling stream of life through a household;—it binds hearts into one "bundle of life";—it shields them from temptation;—it takes the sting from their sorrows. It breathes music into the voice—into the footsteps;—it gives worth and beauty to

the commonest office;—it surrounds home with an atmosphere of moral health;—it gives power to effort, and wings to progress. It is omnipotent—
God is love.

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THE CENTRE-TABLE.: THE GREEN VELVET MANTILLA.

MISS LESLIE

Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book (1844-1848); Jul 1844; 29, American Periodicals
pg. 37

THE CENTRE-TABLE.

BY MISS LESLIE.

Mrs. WAYLAND was a widow in very affluent circumstances, who lived in what is called "handsome style" at the west end of Philadelphia. Like London, all American cities have their "west ends." During a long period of real mourning for the death of her husband, Mrs. Wayland had so entirely lost the habit of going into large companies that she never afterwards resumed it. Yet she found great pleasure in assembling her friends about her, a few at a time, in her own house; and in bestowing her hospitality, discriminately, on such strangers as had something more to recommend them than the mere circumstance of not belonging to her own city. But as it is impossible, in the natural course of things, to select always such guests precisely as we like best, Mrs. Wayland was obliged occasionally to entertain persons who, according to the softened phraseology of the present day, "had their peculiarities." Beside her invited visitors, the neighbours of Mrs. Wayland were much in the practice of dropping in spontaneously, so that she rarely spent an evening alone; the gentlemen belonging to the ladies, making their appearance usually about nine o'clock.

Of the very feminine conversations that took place round the centre-table of Mrs. Wayland, it is our present purpose to produce a specimen, which may probably be followed up by others equally desultory and womanish; yet from which it is hoped a little amusement, and a little improvement in little things may be extracted.

At the commencement of the evening in question, three ladies only were seated with Mrs. Wayland at the centre-table of her front parlour. One of them was Louisa Brookley, a very young and inexperienced girl from the West. Her father, before he removed "so far beyond the mountains," had been a friend of Mr. Wayland's. After bringing with him his daughter on her first visit to Philadelphia, Mr. Brookley had gladly accepted Mrs. Wayland's invitation for Louisa to become a guest at her house, instead of remaining with him at a hotel. The other ladies were from the immediate neighbourhood; had drank tea with Mrs. Wayland; and brought their work with them. One was Mrs. Cottinger, a plain, downright straight-forward woman, and a thorough utilitarian even in her reading; for she took no interest in any book from which she could not derive some new ideas in the form of useful knowledge.

The next was Miss Sophia Olivant, a frank, warm-hearted, and very clever young lady of five-and-twenty; who during six years, had presided "excellently well" over the house of her father;

which perhaps was the chief reason why he evinced no disposition to look out for a second wife. This is a hint to daughters who do not want a step-mother.

These ladies were all engaged in the discussion of a new book of travels, when there arrived an unexpected addition to their little party in the person of another neighbour, Mrs. Pelby, one of that numerous class of respectable women whom Pope characterizes as having "no character at all." It must be from this idea of Pope's that, in Yankee-land, a pumpkin-pie without plenty of ginger, and a chowder without plenty of salt-pork, is denounced as having "no character." And they justly make the same objection to cling-stone peaches.

But let us proceed with our promised sketch, comprising a small portion of this evening's talk. We may as well begin with Mrs. Pelby; after her reception was over, and she had settled down to knitting a *rachel*. Lest future ages should wonder what that is, and call it a Rachel, we will kindly explain, that at this present writing it means a convenient sort of head-gear made of soft yarn; very elastic, and partaking of the various natures of cap, bonnet and hood. And it is certainly much better to devote worsted to this purpose than to waste it in working those horrible pictures which grieve the hearts of all people that ever handled a pencil; and are more painful to the eyes of artists than sparks from a locomotive.

Now ladies, attend. Raise the wicks of your lamps a little higher, or snuff shorter those of your candles; assist the subject with all the light in your power—and then you shall read what you shall read.

Mrs. Pelby.—That is a very beautiful mousseline de laine in your dress, Mrs. Wayland. Excuse me for making the remark.

Mrs. Wayland.—I excuse you with all my heart. It is easy to pardon any thing that gives us pleasure, and it is certainly pleasant to know when our own taste is sanctioned by that of our friends; so I give all mine free permission to express their approbation of any article belonging to me: provided it is done in truth and kindness, as I am sure is always the case with Mrs. Pelby.

Miss Brookley.—I am glad to hear this; for I have admired in silence a great many pretty things since I came to Philadelphia, supposing it was rude to make a remark on them.

Mrs. Wayland.—By no means, dear Louisa; provided that the remark is favourable and sincere.

Mrs. Pelby.—Now, Mrs. Wayland, I am going to flatter. You always wear pretty things, and every thing about your house is pretty.

Miss Olivant.—This is truth, and therefore no flattery.

Miss Brookley.—Must not I say whenever I receive a compliment—"Oh! you flatter me!" I always have said so.

Miss Olivant.—No—instead of disclaiming the compliment, you should acknowledge it silently and gaily, by a smile and an inclination of the head. Or you may say—"I thank you"—or—"I am highly obliged to you." Ladies of ready wit can sometimes reply to a compliment in such a way as to turn it gracefully back upon the person that offered it.

Miss Brookley.—Oh! I never could do that; so I need not venture to try. Now you, Miss Olivant—you are the very lady to say pretty things back again, in a smart, proper manner.

(Miss Olivant bows her head with a smile.)

Mrs. Wayland.—There is one species of compliment which the customs of society have interdicted to a gentleman in talking to a lady. For instance, if he alludes to her personal beauty, he takes an unwarrantable liberty, which she should discourage immediately, by looking coldly and making no reply either in gesture or otherwise.

Miss Brookley.—Dear me, that seems hard.

Mrs. Wayland.—It is always considered that if a gentleman talks to a lady about her bright eyes, her rosy cheeks, her glossy ringlets, or her fine form, he treats her with a freedom which he would not presume to indulge in if he felt any real respect for her. Moreover, it is as great an affront to her understanding to commend her for advantages that are purely accidental, as it would be to her feelings, if, on the other hand, he was cruelly to talk to her about certain defects in her face and figure.

Mrs. Pelby.—Well—Mr. Pelby always praised my nose and chin. That is, before we were married. When young ladies are being courted, they must expect to hear all sorts of foolish talk.

Miss Brookley.—To be sure they must.

Mrs. Cottinger.—Let me add, that when females have it in their power to praise with sincerity, we should never refrain from doing so. Above all, let us never omit an opportunity of gratifying our friends and acquaintances by informing them of whatever we may have heard from others in their commendation.

Mrs. Wayland.—If the rule was constantly observed of telling every one all the good we hear about them, (instead of the reverse, which is so frequently and mischievously practised by ill-natured and vulgar-minded people,) how much more of kind feeling, kind offices, and true friendship, would exist every where throughout the world.

Miss Brookley.—You are right, Mrs. Wayland. I never had the least liking for Harriet Roseley till I was told by Maria Scattergood that Harriet said to her she had never seen any young lady jump a fence or climb a cherry-tree in so handsome a manner as Louisa Brookley. The next time I met Harriet Roseley, you cannot think how sociable I was with her; and from that hour we have been

quite intimate, and I find she improves greatly on acquaintance.

Mrs. Pelby.—I can tell you something exactly the reverse. Mrs. Stinger told me, as a friend, of her overhearing Mrs. Witmore remark that I had the silliest laugh she ever heard in her life. Now I had always liked Mrs. Witmore very well; but after this I never spoke to her again, and did not invite her to my last party.

Mrs. Cottinger.—Your false and malignant friend Mrs. Stinger, was the person you should never have spoken to again, and not invited to your party. Any one who is bad enough to convey to another such a piece of intelligence, is also bad enough to exaggerate it greatly—if not to invent it entirely. And the sooner you throw off such people the better. Also, whenever a lady begins by saying she begs leave to tell me something as a friend, I always find she has some very unfriendly communication to make. Again, when any one desires me not to be offended at what she is going to say, I am very sure she designs saying something that she knows will and ought to give offence.

Mrs. Wayland.—Yes, these prefaces are generally prompted by *malice prepense*; and under any circumstances, are always "more honoured in the breach than in the observance."

Miss Olivant.—You are perfectly right. And there is another introductory expression (and a very ungenteel one it is), that is also extremely impertinent. When any one says to me (as no person of polish or refinement ever does say)—"How much did that cost you,—if it is a fair question?" I always feel inclined to answer—"No; it is a very unfair one." And so it usually is.

Miss Brookley.—Is it rude to inquire the price of an article that a lady is wearing? I have often done so.

Miss Olivant.—If the owner of the article wishes to designate the price, with a view of inducing you to purchase a thing of the same sort, of course she will voluntarily inform you. If she does not, you may take for granted that she would rather avoid mentioning it; and therefore it is rude to compel her to do so, merely for the gratification of your own curiosity.

Miss Brookley.—But, dear Miss Olivant, suppose I *really* wish to buy the same sort of thing exactly.

Miss Olivant.—If you truly and positively have that desire, it is sufficient to inquire at what place it was purchased, and if there was any of it left, or if there were other articles like it. You can then go to the store and bargain for yourself. And when you go, if you have learnt what your friend gave for it, and the store-keeper asks you something more, do not say that Miss or Mrs. Such-a-one bought it there at a lower price. There may be particular reasons for its having been sold so to that lady.

Mrs. Cottinger.—Also, my dear Louisa, when you have seen more of the world, you will find many people who approve or despise things merely

with reference to their cost; and without the slightest admiration of their beauty, or regard for their utility.

Miss Olivant.—As a case in point, I will relate a circumstance that happened to myself, and which might be converted into a magazine story and called—

THE GREEN VELVET MANTILLA.

Several years since, I chanced one morning to visit a certain emporium devoted chiefly to foreign articles of female dress, and to millinery from foreign patterns, over which presided a French lady who afterwards removed to another city. I believe I bought some gloves. It was near three o'clock, and it happened that no other customers were present. The high-priestess of this temple of fashion was very assiduous in showing me a variety of pretty things, which she recommended with true Gallic eloquence, and seemed unusually importunate (even for Madame Ladouce) in earnestly urging me to buy something more. She tried to tempt me with a beautiful green velvet mantilla scarf, which (as it was the last of the lot) she offered me at twenty-five dollars; assuring me that mantillas of exactly the same description, were selling at Vanharlingen's and Levy's for *thirty* dollars. "But"—said she—"I do want some money very particular to day, this morning; and as I know which are the ladies that pay good and quick, I will let *you* have it for twenty-five. So I will do one kindness to you, and you will do one kindness to me."

I was not the least in want of the mantilla; therefore, though I admired it much, I declined taking it. But Madame Ladouce persisted, saying—"Now, I shall whisper in your ear one thing. As the season for rushing at mantillas is a leetle small morsel passing over, I will lower down the cost to twenty dollar."

Still I refused; for, beautiful as the mantilla was, I was perfectly contented with the articles of outdoor-costume which I already possessed. Madame Ladouce continued her persuasions, and abated the price to eighteen dollars. But, even at eighteen, I declined the purchase; knowing how well I could do without it. With no better success, she then fell to fifteen dollars; and I began to feel some pride in the steadiness with which I withstood the temptation. Next she offered it for twelve, and still I held out against her importunities. Finally, with a deep sigh, she said to me—"Well, my dear miss, money does press me so to-day, and ladies have been so few this morning, that if you have ten dollar in your purse, and will give it me here on the spot, at this instant moment, you shall have this beautiful elegant mantilla at that melancholy price."

There was no resisting this. So I took from my pocket-book a ten-dollar note, the sight of which made her eyes sparkle. Highly pleased with my new purchase, I left my velvet cloak to be sent home after me, and I put on the mantilla, which Madame Ladouce assured me was "very much

the most warm of the two." And when I seemed rather to doubt this fact, she convinced me that the weather was so mild "it was just like one day of May, and that my cloak, though it was short and open, must have been quite one suffocation to me; also, green velvet looked cooler much than purple."

As I was proceeding up Chestnut Street in my new mantilla, I was joined by a young lady, (merely a common acquaintance,) whose real name I shall conceal, according to the most approved fashion of story-tellers. I will call her—let me see—I will call her Miss Teazel. Part of our way lying in the same direction, she walked beside me a square or two. Miss Teazel had a velvet mantilla herself, and looking curiously at mine, she said to me—

"Excuse my frankness; but allow me, as a friend, to ask if you are not a little extravagant. Notwithstanding your velvet cloak, (which I have so often admired,) I see you have been indulging yourself with a new mantilla. It is certainly a very elegant one. May I be permitted to ask what you gave for it?"

"Ten dollars"—was my reply, looking steadfastly in her face to see the effect.

At this information she opened her eyes widely, nearly screaming with amazement.

"Ten dollars!—only ten dollars! It cannot be possible. I gave thirty for mine. You are surely jesting."

"It is a serious fact," replied I.

"Where did you get it?" cried the young lady.

I mentioned the place; adding that circumstances had occasioned Madame Ladouce to offer me the mantilla at far less than the usual price.

"Dear me!"—exclaimed Miss Teazel—"how very astonishing! But it must certainly be damaged, or in some way defective."

"Indeed, it is not. I never buy any thing without a careful examination."

"Are you sure it is quite new? Ladouce must have obtained it in some underhand way."

"I am very certain she did not. It was the only one remaining; and she urged me to buy it, because to-day she chanced to be especially in want of money."

"She will make it up to-morrow by laying an extravagant price upon some other articles. I will not go to Ladouce's for a month or two, lest I should have to assist in paying for *your* mantilla."

Here she laughed a sort of laugh, and I was saved from making an indignant reply by our arriving at the corner of her own street, and taking leave of each other.

I had always suspected that Miss Teazel did not like me, and I knew that I did not like *her*; so that, though we met frequently in company, there had never been any intimacy between us.

On the following day, I was making a visit at a house where I found Miss Teazel and several other ladies. As soon as she saw me, she exclaimed—

"Oh! you are wearing that ten dollar mantilla again! I think I shall lay mine aside. Now they

have got down to that price, they cannot continue genteel."

"I thought"—said I, trying to speak very calmly—"you understood, yesterday, that my purchasing this mantilla at so small a cost was owing to peculiar circumstances. Perhaps I did not express myself clearly."

"I don't know—perhaps you did. I may have comprehended the story at the time you told it me; but I have such a bad memory. All I recollect is, you bought that mantilla for ten dollars."

The other ladies now expressed their curiosity to know how such an event could have happened; and I gratified them with an outline of the narrative, related in as few words as possible. There were various conjectures as to Madame Ladouce's reasons for offering such a mantilla at such a price. The conversation became rather unpleasant to me, and I was glad to change it by talking of an approaching marriage in fashionable society—a topic which generally seems to interest all the females of our community, whether fashionable themselves or not.

The report of my having bought the mantilla for ten dollars soon spread widely around; and my acquaintances (I do not include my friends) continually annoyed me on the subject—for it really became an annoyance. One would say to me—"Is that your ten-dollar mantilla? Well, it is certainly a wonderful bargain. I did not know you were one of those fortunate people that can always get things cheap."

Another would take it up and feel it, saying—"Are you quite sure the velvet is all silk? To me it has rather a cottony feel. I hardly think it can be real French. For my part, I always mistrust a bargain."

A third young lady told me she had mentioned the circumstance to her brother; and he said that in all probability Madame Ladouce wanted money to take up a note before three o'clock.

A fourth informed me that her father thought Madame Ladouce had just had a bill sent to her, accompanied by threats, and that she had no other means of paying it immediately than by sacrificing the mantilla.

A fifth acquainted me that it was her mother's conjecture Ladouce's girls had struck for wages.

A sixth confided to me her aunt's opinion, that poor Ladouce had really not money enough in the house, on that day, to purchase a dinner for her family; many of her fashionable customers being such very bad pay.

In short, my cheap mantilla (as they called it) was fairly driven out of the field. I became quite nervous about it, and gave up wearing it in Philadelphia; only enjoying its delights while on a visit with my father to New York and Boston. I thought, at one time, of laying it aside to convert into trimming for a future pelisse, and of having a bonnet made of the remainder. But I gave up the design, on recollecting that years hence it would be recognized by the same pertinacious people, and

that I should hear of it again as the identical green velvet of the identical cheap mantilla. And this would be worse than ever. So finally I bestowed it on a young friend whom I valued highly, who could not afford to buy such a thing, and who was on the eve of marriage to a denizen of Arkansaw.

I rejoiced in the thought of never again seeing that unhappy mantilla, now that it was gone beyond the Mississippi. But worse than all—Madame Ladouce received a few more of those articles, which, not being again so pressed for ready money, she offered for sale at the usual price. Yet they all remained on her hands; for when she showed them to her Philadelphia customers, she was generally answered to this effect—"Dear Madame Ladouce! how can you think of asking so extravagantly high for these mantillas, when I know Miss Sophy Olivant only gave you ten dollars for hers. You cannot think how she has boasted of her bargain, all over the city."

I need not describe my compunction and sorrow, when Madame Ladouce, one day that I chanced to find her again alone, reproached me with having betrayed what she termed "a secret honourable between us two selves. And now"—said the Frenchwoman—"I will tell you why I did want that money so very urge. I was going the same evening to have one chris for my dear little baby, and, out of the greatness of one mother's love, to consecrate the chris of his name by one beautiful supper. So I did invite one large party of French friends. But I say with grief, and very proper indignation, that the cruel and barbarous confectioners refused to furnish the delicacies of the table till I had paid some bills they said I had owed them long. And to do this purpose, I am frank to confess I possessed not money suffish just at that time. So I set hard to work the day before the chris, and made all my young girls go fast and sew up every cap and bonnet that was bespeaked, and more besides. And I was trimmings, trimmings all day long. And every thing was sended home with bills; but not one of the ladies paid any bills at all. So what could I do when come the day of my dear little baby's chris. The party of company had all been ask; and the hard-heart confectioners would give nothing without money; and there was not money enough in my house to have tall ornaments of sugar, and pretty vases of bonbons. So, in my despair, I sacrificed to maternal tenderess the last of my mantillas, and sold it you for near nothing. And, through this means, my dear little baby had his chris *comme il faut*."

Madame Ladouce had now talked herself into a good humour; and I increased it by purchasing one of her bonnets, for which she made me pay far more than the usual price. I was glad, however, to know that in the autumn she finally disposed of her velvet mantillas by very profitable sales, to some of those western ladies who think nothing of coming a thousand miles for a new supply of finery.

THE CENTRE-TABLE.: NO. II

MISS LESLIE

Godey's Magazine and Lady's Book (1844-1848); Aug 1844; 29, American Periodicals
pg. 51

THE CENTRE-TABLE.

NO. II

BY MISS LESLIE.

It was not till after the lapse of a fortnight, that the same ladies again found themselves assembled at their work, round the centre-table of Mrs. Wayland. They had soon an addition to their number in the person of Mrs. Martlet, a young new-married lady from the eastern section of the union.

Morva Linwood had been brought up (or rather permitted to bring herself up) by an over-indulgent stepmother, who having no children of her own, became extravagantly fond of the daughter and the three sons of her husband's former marriage. Mrs. Linwood concentrated all her pride and pleasure in making these children happy, comfortable, cheerful, rosy, and above all, fat. And fat they certainly were as long as their childhood continued, but like most young people, they grew slender as they got into their teens. Mr. Linwood's business compelled him to pass much of his time from home, and when he returned after a long absence, he was so delighted always to see his children in good health and spirits, and overflowing with affection for himself and their phenomenon of stepmothers, that he could not find it in his heart to check their felicity by tightening the rein which his wife permitted to lie so loosely on their necks. Moreover, though they all did as they pleased, they did nothing that indicated any incipient vice; and their follies were those of early youth and vivid imagination, as yet unsobered by experience and reason.

The chief enjoyment of Morva Linwood was in books. From her fifth year she read without any restriction as to either quantity or quality. She soon ceased to take interest in such works as are generally written for little girls and boys, particularly when the language was adapted to the low standard at which the comprehension of children is usually rated. Dr. Johnson was half right in saying that babies do not like baby stories. He would have been whole right had he averred that the waywardness of human nature soon begins to show itself in the fact that children are far better pleased with tales of bad boys and naughty girls, than with stories of good ones. We knew a little urchin (now a very excellent young man) who could only be bribed to listen to what he called a good-boy story by the promise of rewarding him afterwards with two bad-boy stories.

To return to Morva Linwood. Before she had attained her fourteenth year, she could quote from every book in her father's library, though a large portion of them belonged to the class now denominated "the old authors." Her most delightful

hours were spent in this quiet and secluded apartment—reclining in a high-backed well-padded armchair, near an open window in summer, and by a good fire in winter; attired in the untrammeled ease of a loose wrapper; her hair tucked behind her ears because curls might fall over her eyes and be troublesome; her feet luxuriating in those softest of all shoes, a pair of Indian mocassins, and resting on a broad well-cushioned footstool—not forgetting on the table beside her a basket of cakes or fruit to nibble at as she read, and a pitcher of water and a glass. "Dear child"—said her paragon stepmother—"when she is happy and comfortable in the library, who could have the heart to call her off or disturb her. No, no—let her enjoy herself in her own way now she is young. Trouble and grief will come soon enough of themselves; and no doubt, like every one else, Morva will have her share. Book knowledge is a good foundation. She is smart enough, though she does rend so much; and I am very certain when she is obliged to learn other things, she will easily succeed."

When Morva Linwood grew up she found herself, to her great surprise, a very pretty girl; and she now felt less difficulty in emerging from her retreat in the library. She actually went to several parties the season she "came out," and (independent of her beauty) her freshness, frankness, originality and *naïveté*, attracted universal attention. On one of these occasions, she excited much interest in Mr. Martlet, from Philadelphia, a gentleman of good appearance, good manners, good sense, and in a very good and well conducted business. This interest soon became mutual, and with the cordial approbation of her family it led the way to marriage. Mr. Martlet brought his wife to Philadelphia, where he had purchased a house, and furnished it handsomely for her reception. Mr. Martlet being a very popular man, his bride received many civilities from the families in which he had visited and from those that resided in her neighbourhood.

Launched into a new world, moving in a new capacity, Morva Martlet immediately began to feel that some other knowledge than book knowledge is indispensable to the mistress of a house. It is true, the substantial foundation on which she had built her literary taste, saved her from wasting her time over what are called trash novels, and namby-pamby verses. There was no danger that, like the novel-reading wife of that unhappy man who sets forth his domestic grievances in the once popular ditty of "The Tidy One," Mrs. Martlet should have

starched the cravat of her husband with camomile tea, added his shaving-brush to the usual ingredients of a beef-steak pie, mixed brimstone for mustard, and put cayenne in the custard. She was well aware of her deficiencies, spoke of them frankly, regretted them sincerely, and was earnestly desirous of improvement, and of profiting as much as possible by the advice of her new friends.

In return for the parties that had been made for her, Mrs. Martlet gave one herself; two evenings after which, her husband being on his way to attend a public meeting, left her at Mrs. Wayland's door; and she joined the ladies at the centre-table. We must premise that a pre-engagement had prevented Miss Olivant from going to Mrs. Martlet's party. Mrs. Cottinger had been out of town for near a fortnight, and Mrs. Wayland declined every invitation to a large company. Addressing herself to these ladies, Mrs. Martlet said to them—"To speak frankly, I was both glad and sorry that you were not there. Sorry that my guests could not enjoy something of your society, and glad that you were not there to witness the vexatious and *mal-apropos* things which succeeded each other all the evening. I know I showed my mortification too plainly. My dear husband tried to encourage me by saying that I considered all these *contre-temps* too deeply, and that he was sure good would come out of the evil, for they would have the salutary effect of causing me to guard against similar mischances another time. And indeed I hope it may be so. I told Mr. Martlet when we were first engaged, that he would find in his future wife,

"—— an unlesson'd girl, unschool'd, unpractis'd;
Happy in this, she is not yet so old
But she may learn ——"

Mrs. Wayland.—And you might have added,

"—— happier than this,
She is not form'd so dull but she can learn."

Mrs. Martlet.—Perhaps I did say that. Oh! my dear Mrs. Cottinger; if unfortunately for me you had not been out of town, both before and at the time of the party—(my first party, you know,) I should at once have depended on your kindness, as you are so much *au-fait* of all sorts of useful knowledge, and I would have referred myself entirely to your excellent counsel on every thing relating to this ill-starred evening. I was so grieved, Mrs. Wayland, when on asking advice of you, you desired me not to rely on any suggestions of yours, because going no longer into company, you had lost the routine of party-fashions. So I was glad to get information wherever I could. Then I regretted that whenever mamma was going to have company, I had always retreated to the library, and shut myself up there the whole day that I might see or know nothing of the preparations. I never took the trouble to ascertain by what means every thing was made to come out so well, without any annoyance or discomfort either to the guests or the hostess; but certainly at mamma's parties all

seemed perfect. I wish some one would write a book on the art of giving parties.

Mrs. Pelby.—Well—I never could go by books—so it would be of no use to me. I find no better guide than my own sense.

Miss Brookley.—But, dear Mrs. Martlet, to me your party seemed delightful. I was introduced to more than twenty gentlemen, all so polite, and so agreeable, and so handsome.—At least, if they were not really handsome they looked so. Perhaps, it was because they were so very well dress'd; their coats fitting so nicely; and such genteel waist-coats; and becoming cravats; and their hair so handsomely fixed. I heard several other young ladies say they had never spent a more pleasant evening.

Mrs. Martlet.—I am much obliged to you and the other young ladies; but I fear such was not the general opinion.

Miss Brookley.—Miss Wilgrave, and Miss Metland, and the Miss Lonsburys, (all of whom seemed experienced in parties,) remarked that the beaux were first-rate.

Mrs. Martlet.—I am very glad to hear it. And, indeed, it was fortunate for me that the excellence of the beaux should have withdrawn the attention of the young ladies from certain deficiencies in other things, which I am afraid were too palpable to those who take no note of beaux.

Miss Brookley.—Oh! is it possible there are such persons?

Miss Olivant.—But I fear, my dear Mrs. Martlet, you permitted yourself to be annoyed by mere trifles, which in all probability were imperceptible to the company. That was my own case, at the first party I gave after being intrusted by my father with the superintendence of his house. It seemed to me an awful responsibility. I recollect, for instance, having set my mind on having two large plum-cakes made in a form described to me by a friend who had seen such things in Paris. They were to represent flower-pots with camellias growing in them.

Miss Brookley.—Oh! what a pretty idea. How beautifully they must have looked?

Miss Olivant.—The design was to have them baked in moulds shaped like large, deep, wide-topped flower-pots. Then, on being taken out of the moulds, the sides of the two cakes were to be iced all over, decorated with festoons of sugar-flowers, and bordered round the edge with ornamental candy. The tops of the cakes were to remain without icing, so as to look like brown earth. A deep hole was to be left in the centre, for the insertion of the camellias. All these directions I carefully wrote down for the confectioner; and to make assurance doubly sure, I accompanied them with a drawing representing these plum-cake flower-pots just as they were to look when finished. I calculated on their being greatly admired. But (as he afterwards acknowledged) the confectioner lost the paper; and being taken ill and unable to think about them himself, the new idea of the cakes was

entrusted to his wife, who unluckily could not understand it. It was late before the cakes arrived, and my first sight of them was on the supper-table. And what a sight! The tops were iced instead of the sides, which were left exposed and bare in their natural roughness and brownness. The camellias had been forgotten, though I had put some beautiful ones in water for the purpose; and in the centre of each top was a useless, deep empty hole. There were the two uncommon-looking cakes, standing up, tall, awkward, and meaning nothing, looking unlike flower-pots or any thing else. I was far more disconcerted then than I should be now on a similar occasion. I felt as if every eye was fixed on these strange cakes; and if I observed persons speaking low, I thought they were making private comments upon them, and wondering at their peculiarities. I had not presence of mind to do the best thing that was left for me, frankly to explain the truth to one or two of the ladies near me, that they might, if they thought it worth while, circulate the explanation among the company. My mortification prevented me from observing that the guests were all so satisfactorily engaged with other articles of the supper, that few, if any, bestowed a thought upon these unfortunate attempts at flower-pots. Finally they were cut by my father and another gentleman, and on being tasted pronounced excellent.

Mrs. Martlet.—Ah! that must have been a great consolation.

Miss Olivant.—So it was. But still I thought that the absurd appearance of these cakes must have excited much surprise and many remarks; yet even had that really been the case, there was not sufficient cause for all the vexation I felt when looking at them. I took special care to apologize for my flower-pots to the ladies that made their calls after the party; and all assured me that they believed no one had uttered a single remark upon them.

Mrs. Cottinger.—I was there, and thought every thing went off, (as the phrase is,) remarkably well.

Mrs. Pelby.—So was I; and I merely supposed the confectioner's icing had given out before he carried it down the sides of the cakes. As to the shape, I imagined it to be a new fashion, but I did not think they were intended for flower-pots.

Mrs. Martlet.—Well, if the flower-pots were all Miss Olivant's vexations at her first party, they were "trifles light as air" compared to mine. Unfortunately for me, Mrs. Needham, as soon as she received her invitation, came and volunteered her advice; and in fact, she beset me all the time I was preparing, and talked me into following her suggestions against my own judgment and inclination. I see she is one of those officious, overpowering women, whose acquaintance it would be well to drop. Her chief object seemed to be that my party should cost my husband as little as possible. That would have been very well had we been poor people, which I hope and believe we are not. And if we were, I am certain we would make no attempt at giving parties.

Mrs. Cottinger.—Mrs. Needham is one of those too common characters that, not satisfied with saving all they can for themselves, are equally assiduous in saving for every one else, even when there are no circumstances to warrant the practice of undue parsimony.

Miss Brookley.—I despise all meanness, and mean people.

Mrs. Martlet.—So do I; and yet upon this occasion I have foolishly suffered myself to be influenced by Mrs. Needham. But I had my punishment, as you shall hear. *Commencer par le commencement;* I had intended that all the requisites for this entertainment should be furnished by one of the principal confectioners in this city of good things, abounding as it does in excellent artists who pursue that profession, and excellent materials for them to work with. But Mrs. Needham teased me into employing one that she had patronized for years, and who, notwithstanding, has always lived in a very remote part of the town. I did not then know he was a *cheap* confectioner, or I should have mistrusted him; for my husband had cautioned me, as soon as we went to housekeeping, against employing people who profess to do things considerably under the usual price; unless indeed they are just commencing business, and especially anxious to be known, and to get customers at once.

Mrs. Pelby.—I've always found that cheap shops never last long. Either they soon turn into dear ones, or else people find out that their goods are mere trash, and quit buying them. Now this same Mrs. Needham wears out her shoes and those of her children in going to a cheap shoemaker who lives almost at Kensington, and makes bad shoes at a few cents less than she could get good ones for down in the city. Nobody can say of me that I am penny wise and pound foolish. Indeed, I am celebrated for paying high prices, and certainly far from foolish in any thing.

Miss Olivant.—Mrs. Martlet, please to proceed.

Mrs. Martlet.—Well, I was persuaded by Mrs. Needham to go to Mr. Heavystreak's very distant shop to bespeak the confectionary for my party. On our way thither, she assured me that I had best have a false cake for the centre of the supper-table. I think I will call my story—

THE FALSE CAKE.

Miss Brookley.—A false cake!

Mrs. Martlet.—Yes, a cake merely for show, and not fit to eat; being made somehow of the cheapest ingredients, (sour rye meal and salt, and raised with potash melted in vinegar,) but baked in a handsome fluted mould, and iced all over and beautifully ornamented. These cakes, according to Mrs. Needham, were made in perfection by Mr. Heavystreak, who was so accommodating as, for a small sum, to take them back if they were not cut; and so hire them out again, the same cake serving for the central ornament of the supper-table at several parties. "But suppose it should be cut?"—said I. "Oh!"—answered Mrs. Needham

--"that must be your business to prevent. You must give Mr. Martlet a previous hint not to meddle with it, or invite any one to take a piece." "I never can do that"--was my reply--"for I cannot venture to tell him beforehand what it is; and my husband will most assuredly be the very man to cut that detestable cake. I think I see him at it." "Then"--returned Mrs. Needham--"you must contrive that he shall be kept very busy helping every body to every thing else. You can easily manage it. Only exert your usual cleverness."

I was glad to hear that I was clever, and found that I rather liked Mrs. Needham for telling me so. Consequently, she found it less difficult to persuade me into the false cake. But I insisted on having a large fine real lady-cake to be handed round at tea. Mrs. Needham protested that tea was quite unnecessary, and no longer expected at parties; but my husband had stipulated for the introduction of both tea and coffee to enliven the company at the commencement of the evening.

Mrs. Cottinger.—He was right.

Mrs. Martlet.—We were a long time completing our arrangements with Mr. Heavystreak, whom I did not at all like. Mrs. Needham was all the while counteracting my orders, and saying of each article that a smaller quantity would suffice, and impressing on Mr. Heavystreak that he was to make the things very plain.

Mrs. Pelby.—Meaning very poor.

Mrs. Martlet.—All this reminded me of Moliere's miser, when he is planning the amazing effort of giving a supper. *L'Avare* reminded me of *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, and *Le Malade Imaginaire*, and others of Moliere's amusing comedies. I unconsciously began to think over some of the best things in all these plays, and by the time I had gotten to *Le medecin malgré lui*, Mrs. Needham startled me by touching my shoulder, and saying—"Come, it is time for us to go. I have arranged every thing with Mr. Heavystreak. He knows now exactly what to provide. And when his bill comes"—she added, in a low voice—"you will be astonished at its smallness." I felt very uneasy, and full of apprehension that all would not go well; yet somehow I could make no resistance. So we left the shop, and she began to talk to me about hiring the waiters who were to attend on my company. I told her I intended to engage coloured men for this purpose, and I mentioned some whose tact, smartness, good manners, and knowledge of their business, I had admired at the parties to which I had been invited. But Mrs. Needham had an aversion to coloured people, and she tried to persuade me that it was far better to have white waiters; that is, Irishmen. Then I began to think of Sterne, and Goldsmith, and Sheridan, and "the glory of Grattan, and genius of Moore," and my companion walked me on till we arrived at a door, over which was a small sign, inscribed—"Jeames Mecorkle attends parties." Here she informed me lived the cheapest waiter in Philadelphia, and therefore I must positively have

him, in case we should be so fortunate as to find him disengaged.

Mrs. Pelby.—Dear me, you were led like a lamb to the slaughter.

Mrs. Martlet.—This was the domicile of the cheap Irishman. And, before I could stop her, Mrs. Needham had knocked at the door, and Jeames Mecorkle was forthcoming; and she was in the full tide of bargaining with him for Wednesday evening. I did not at all like his looks. He had a dull, stupid mouth, and cunning, impudent eyes. I began to think of the science of physiognomy, and of Lavater, and Zurich, and the Swiss lakes, and William Tell, till I was interrupted by Mrs. Needham taking my arm, and telling me that Mr. Mecorkle would come, and bring his assistants with him, and that I was in luck to find him disengaged.

Mrs. Pelby.—I observed this man and his followers at your party, and wondered where you picked them up, till I saw that Mrs. Needham was acquainted with them, and was stopping them as they wandered about, and telling them not to do this and not to do that.

Mrs. Martlet.—Yes, I know she did so, making "confusion worse confounded." Well, to begin at the beginning of that eventful evening, the cakes arrived, and it must be confessed the false one looked extremely well. It was very large, spirally fluted, covered with pink icing, and handsomely ornamented. But I particularly endeavoured to impress on Mr. Jeames Mecorkle that it was to be reserved uncut for the centre of the supper-table, and that the large lady-cake was to go round with the tea. The lady-cake was quite different in its form and decorations, which were entirely white. I went up stairs to dress myself, and having a sort of misgiving, I resolved to go down as soon as I had completed my toilet, and arrange the cake-tray with my own hands. Chancing to hear the coffee-grinding, I said to myself—"The berries crackle, and the mill turns round,"—and that reminded me of Pope's Belinda, and Hampton Court, and Queen Anne; and Pope made me think of Homer. So I forgot all about the cakes, and as soon as I was drest I ran down to receive the company, hearing a carriage with the first arrivals, in the act of drawing up to the door. In a short time nearly all the guests had arrived, and tea was brought in. Imagine my dismay when I beheld the false cake going round, with a knife stuck in it, and people taking out a slice, and looking curiously at it, (for the inside had just the aspect of rye bread,) and tasting it, and trying hard to swallow a mouthful, and finally leaving the slices on their plates. Oh! how I felt my face burn. I withdrew from the vicinity of the ladies, lest I should chance to hear some ill-suppressed remarks. I approached a recess in which stood several sedate gentlemen, whose wives were in a distant part of the room. Among them I saw Mr. Starbuck, the great astronomer, who is as absent as Sir Isaac Newton, and as little familiar with the pursuits of common life.

He had taken a piece, (and profoundly ignorant of its not being a right cake,) he persevered in chewing and chewing, and swallowing and swallowing, till he had worked his way through a thick slice of it. And then he turned to Mr. Wiseman, who had given it up at sight, and said to him, solemnly—"All that is of this earth must decay. Time spares naught. I have just discovered that mastication is becoming difficult to me." Next I saw Mr. Stillwell, the great chemist, turn his face to the wall to analyze privately a bit of the unhappy cake, holding it up to the light of a bracket lamp, squeezing it between his thumb and fingers, breaking off a morsel and tasting it. At last I heard him murmur—"Farina horeoli; chloride of sodium strongly exhibited; powerful demonstration of carbonate of potassa; the whole masked by a saccharine incrustation; flavour unpalatable; deception unjustifiable."

Miss Brookley.—But was the cake really so bad?

Mrs. Martlet.—Oh! disgusting beyond description. I made a desperate effort to take a morsel myself, and it seemed fit for Macbeth's witches to sop in "the ingredients of their cauldron!" Next it came to Mr. Pottinger, the great traveller, who professes to be perfect stoic with regard to food; and tells of having eaten raw herrings in Holland, and saw-dust biscuits in Norway, and cats in Spain, and rats and earth-worms in China, so I thought he, perhaps, might relish it. But he was worse than any one, for he pshaw'd, and pooh'd, and sputtered, and was downright disagreeable. At last it came to my husband; and as he took a slice, I watched him in agony.

Miss Brookley.—Oh! poor thing.

Miss Olivant.—And what did Mr. Martlet say or do?

Mrs. Martlet.—Why, he gave me a look of tender compassion, the dear fellow, and then an encouraging smile. And I fell to thinking of conubial affection, and Faetus and Arria, and Sabinus and Eponina, and Edward and Eleanora; and felt as if I also could sacrifice myself for my husband. And by the time I had revolved in my mind the stories of these heroic wives, the cake had gone out of the room. Then, in the midst of my joy, I began to fear that it would in all probability be brought back again with the next round of tea, and I dreaded its return. But it appeared no more—the lady-cake occupying its place, and I afterwards found that my dear considerate husband had taken an opportunity to forbid its re-entrance; seeing that I was too much disconcerted and confused to give any orders about it. Now, my dear Mrs. Cottinger, what would you have done in such a case?

Mrs. Cottinger.—If I had ventured on the risk of providing a false cake for the supper-table, and it had been produced in mistake with the tea, I believe, as soon as I perceived its entrance, I should have made a sign to the waiter to come to me, and in a low voice I would have desired him to carry it out of the room immediately, and to put the right one in its place. But where was your head waiter, and who carried the things on the trays?

Mrs. Martlet.—Oh! it was that vile Mecorkle. The fault was all his. He had been told that the pink-cake was the false one; but he could not remember; and thought the white cake was to be kept back. Yes, as I said, he brought a posse of his countrymen with him, (bargains of his own,) and they were blundering about in one way or other all the evening. One tall, awkward fellow, with a set smile on his face, stood in the vestibule to show in the company; sawing the air with the back of his hand, and pointing upwards to the stairs, and sideways to the parlours, in the most ridiculous way possible, intending all the while to be graceful. Then another stood at the top of the stair-case, showing the ladies to the door of the gentleman's room, and the gentlemen to that of the ladies. Then, in handing round tea, they began at the gentlemen first, and even after they discovered the ladies, they missed half of them. Then, as I had foolishly entrusted the trimming of the lamps to Mr. Mecorkle, some smoked and some went out.

Miss Brookley.—Yes, I noticed that.

Mrs. Martlet, smiling.—You could not do otherwise, notwithstanding the beaux. And I hope you were so agreeably entertained as not to perceive how very late it was before the supper table was set in the back parlour. I have often, since I came to Philadelphia, observed with surprise and curiosity the celerity, ease, and *savoir faire*, with which this business is accomplished by a set of smart coloured waiters; but my Hibernians were all following each other round, or standing stock still, and staring at nothing; or shuffling in and out, and carrying nothing, and all the time quarrelling with each other in an under tone. Two or three times there was a crash heard in the passage; and yet I knew I was expected to be "mistress of myself though china fell." Finally the things were all jumbled pell-mell on the table; and then we all proved the delights of Mr. Heavystreak's cheap confectionary—imagine my mortification. I did not dare to cast my eyes towards my husband, for I feared his amiability could not stand any further test. I longed to "hide my diminished head."

Miss Brookley.—But then, my dear Mrs. Martlet, there was an abundance of excellent things on the table that were not confectionary. I am sure the company feasted sumptuously, after all.

Mrs. Pelby.—Oh! yes; the terrapin, and oysters, and chicken-salad were as good as I ever tasted in my own house.

Mrs. Martlet.—Oh! but the blanc mange, like rice dough, tasting of no one thing; the pale, weak, insipid jelly! And then the ice-creams, or rather the ice-milks! that which was meant for lemon, tasting like hartshorn; the orange like turpentine; and the vanilla like creosote.

Mrs. Cottinger.—Because the flavouring ingredients had been procured from the druggists, instead of getting fresh lemons, oranges, and vanilla beans from the fruiterer. Bad essence of lemon does taste like hartshorn; bad extract of vanilla has the

taste of creosote, and old oil of orange-peel is as like turpentine as possible.

Mrs. Martlet.—And then to see the waiters! Mr. Mecorkle looking fiercely at them all, and being himself in reality no better than the rest. They were actually ignorant of the names of the things that were asked for.

Miss Olivant.—Undoubtedly. What chance could they have had of learning them in their native cabins.

Mrs. Martlet.—They must all have come over in the very last ship. There was one, an elderly gray haired man, that had been transplanted quite too late. I really pitied the poor fellow; his was such a hopeless case, he was so incapable, and so much alarmed, and so utterly bewildered.

Miss Brookley.—Oh! yes, I observed him. He seemed as if the little sense he had was fast deserting him. He knew nothing about any thing, and, when spoken to, answered at random. I asked him for a glass of lemonade—and he started, and stared, and looked wild and said—"Oh! yes, madam—yes, sure—what is it—how do ye do?"

Mrs. Martlet.—And now for the last act of the unhappy farce. While I was thinking of Castle Rackrent, and the O'Hara family, and orange and green, and harps, and shamrocks, one of these sons of the Emerald isle, in trying to make a short cut across the room, thought it best to stoop down and creep under the table, selecting the very centre for his transit. But finding some embarrassment in the enterprise, he suddenly gave his head a bob upwards, raised his :

shoulders against the extension leaf, loosened the support, and down it came with all its contents, including candle-branches, flower vases, ice-milks, terrapin, &c. &c. And, as I was thinking at that moment of the song—I involuntarily exclaimed—"Erin go bragh." I am really ashamed to say so, but I fear I have taken as great an aversion to Irishmen as Mr. Kilpatrick.

Mrs. Wayland.—And yet I have met with Irish waiters who were intelligent, alert, capable, and always performed their duties understandingly.

Mrs. Pelby.—But then, you know, yours were cheap waiters, recommended by Mrs. Needham. I wonder she could sit and see all their proceedings, and not be ashamed of herself. I suppose, *Mrs. Martlet*, you have now had a surfeit of cheapness.

Mrs. Martlet.—Indeed I have. And to retrieve my character as a party-giver, my dear husband insists on my having another in about a fortnight; the ostensible occasion being the arrival of my brother Oswald, who has recently returned from Europe, and will make us a visit just at that time. So, ladies, keep yourselves disengaged for the important evening, in which I am to show you that I can have things in a proper way, by taking measures accordingly; depending, this time, if she will permit me, on the judicious advice of *Mrs. Cottinger*. You will find the very pinks of coloured waiters, such as never creep under tables; well trimmed lamps; well-flavoured ice-cream; and no false cakes.